The Advent

Hostile forces are tolerated in the world only because they put man's sincerity to test. The day man becomes integrally sincere, they will pass away, for there will be no longer any reason for their existence.

The ADVENT

April 1950

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I am the beauty of the unveiled Ray
Drawing through the deep roads of the infinite night
The unconquerable pilgrim soul of earth
Beneath the flaring torches of the stars.
I am the inviolable Ecstasy;
They who have looked on me, shall grieve no more.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, THE BOOK OF DAY, CANTO I)

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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIAL

MATTER ASPIRES

MATTER holds and expresses material energy, the subtlest and highest form of which is electric energy. Should Matter be confined to that alone or can it express or create, by and out of itself, non-material energy also? What about mental energy and thought movements—can they too be made a function of Matter?

For example, the computing machine. It has been developed to a marvellous extent. Not only big but complicated calculations are done by it, not only the four major arithmetical operations, but higher algebraic and trigonometrical problems too are tackled successfully. The electronic computor seems to possess a veritable mathematical brain.

It is asked now if the machine is capable of so much mathematics, may it not be capable also of poetic creation? The possibility has been discussed in a very lively and interesting manner in *The Hibbert Journal* (October,'49 and January, '50). The writer Sir Robert Watson-Watt thinks it is not impossible, indeed quite possible, for a machine to write, for example, a sonnet. Only the question will be with regard to the kind—the quality and standard —of the poetic creation. What will come out of the machine will depend upon what has been put into it, that is to say, what the brain that constructed it succeeded in transplanting into it. The writer after weighing the pros

and cons arrives at the remarkable and amusing conclusion that a machine built by a second class brain may succeed in producing a poem of third class merit, but it can never produce anything first class. To produce a first class poem through a machine at least a first class brain must work at it. But the pity is that a Shakespeare or a Milton would prefer to write straight away a poem himself instead of trying to work it out through a machine which may give out in the end only a second class or worse production.

I said it is an amusing discussion. But what is apt to be forgotten in such "scientific" discussions is, as has been pointed out by Rev. Trethowan in his criticism of Sir Robert, that all genuine creation is a *freak*, that is to say, it is a movement of freedom, of incalculable spontaneity. A machine is exactly the sum of its component parts; it can give that work (both as regards quantity and quality) which is confined within the frame and function of the parts. Man's creative power is precisely this that it can make two and two not merely four but infinity. There is a force of intervention in him which upsets the rule of the parallelogram of forces that normally governs Matter and even his own physical brain and mind. There is in him truly a *deus ex machina*. Poetry, art, all creative act is a revelation, an intrusion of a truth, a reality from another plane, of quite a different order, into the rigid actuality and factual determinism. Man's secret person is a sovereignly free will. A machine is wholly composed of actualities—the given—and brings out only a resultant of the permutation and combination of the data: it is a pure deduction.

But there is another even more interesting aspect of the matter. The attempt of the machine to embody or express something non-mechanical, to leap as high as possible from material objects to psychological values has a special significance for us today and is not all an amusing or crazy affair. It indicates, what we have been always saying, an involved pressure in Matter, a force of consciousness secreted there that seeks release and growth and expression.

The scientific spirit, that is to say, man's inquiring mind, even when it specifically deals with Matter and material phenomena, cannot be made to confine, to limit itself to that region alone. It always overleaps itself and stretches beyond its habitual and conventional frontiers. The yearning of Matter for Light is an extraordinary phenomenon of Nature: physically speaking, we have reached the equation of the two. But that light is only a first signpost or symbol: it invites Matter towards higher and freer vibration. The old determinism has given place in the heart of Matter to significant eccentricities which seem to release other types of élan. When the brain-mind indulges in fabricating clay-images of God, it is not merely a foolish

or idle pastime: it indicates a deep ingrained hunger. All this reveals a will or aspiration in Matter, in what is apparently dead and obscure (*achit*), to move and reach out towards what is living and luminous and supremely living and luminous (*chit*). Matter finally is to embody and express the Spirit.

VALUES HIGHER AND LOWER

Here is a dictum:

"An important discovery of modern metaphysics of value is that higher values *depend on* (italics are ours) lower values, i.e. owe their existence to lower values."

And a further gloss:

"We have got to take the lower values as base and *only after that* (italics are ours) aspire to achieve spiritual values in the light of changed time and mentality, (the last phrase also should be in italics)."

Outlook, Calcutta, Feb. 1950.

The problem in the final analysis is as ancient as man's first utterance. Which comes first, which is more important—Spirit or Matter, Body or Soul? Naturally, there have been always two answers, according to one's outlook. Some have declared Annam comes first, Annam is of primary importance, Annam is to be increased, Annam is to be worshipped: or again, earth is the firm status, be founded upon earth—*shariram adyam*. On the other hand, it has also been declared that the Spirit comes first, the Spirit is the true foundation, the roots of creation are up there, not here below: if that is known, then only all this is known; it is by that Light all that shines here shines. And if I miss that, what is the use of all this world of things?

In fact, however, the reality is a polarised entity: and both ends are equally necessary, for each is involved in the other. It is an unreal distinction, due to mind's prejudice and preference, that says one is first and the other next or last, one is more important and the other less. The true truth is that Spirit and Matter are one: For Spirit is Matter involved and Matter is Spirit evolved. The position can be stated in this form also: without Spirit, Matter does not exist; without Matter, Spirit does not manifest.

The balance is upset exactly when we say that the higher *depends on* the lower or that it comes after. Not only so, the statement is likely to involve an error, a mistaken view. If one has to make a distinction between higher and lower, inner and outer, it will be nearer the truth and fact to say that the lower depends on the higher, it is the inner reality that upholds and inspires the outer form: without this inner cohesive deity all the external

frame would fall to pieces. It is not the contingencies of time and circumstances, of day-to-day existence that determine the nature and form of power of the soul and spirit. It is the pressure of the Inner Being, *antaryami*, that brings about the pattern and organisation of the outer life. At the summit of being, at the absolute point of consciousness the two are identical, absolutely one and the same. In the lower ranges as manifestation and variation begin the two maintain their union and harmony and mutuality so long as the consciousness retains its purity and the being is not invaded by Ignorance. Ignorance means the gradual predominance of the outer and the lower, till it reaches its last point in Inconscience where Matter is the only reality and everything is made to stand and depend on the grossest reality.

Even then, even from that nadir, let us consider things a little more closely. We have still consciousness left in us as human beings. Now, because man has a body and because he has to live and move in physical surroundings and circumstances, therefore body and physical conditions must necessarily come to his consciousness first in importance—this is not a valid argument nor a statement of fact. For man has and is something else besides: and this something else, in other words, the spiritual being, is quite a free and independent entity and can act as it wills ignoring and ignorant of the body and its circumstances. Whether one is poor or rich, successful or frustrated, happy or unhappy, one can always listen and follow the call of the Spirit.

It may be that for most men the physical life is of first and primary importance and they look upon the spiritual life, if ever they do, as a secondary pursuit; even as children consider food and play as the one thing needful, study or mental exercise quite a secondary or tertiary affair occupying a small side corner. This is because the taste for the higher life belongs to a more developed consciousness, not because it is something really dependent and derivative. Indeed, we do in fact see people—individually or collectively (like the early Christians, for example)—suddenly becoming conscious of the burning reality of the Spirit, in the midst of and in spite of the most adverse and all-engrossing outer physical conditions, and follow it caring nothing. So the Christ directs: Follow Me, let the dead bury their dead; and the Indian Shastra enjoins: *Yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajet*—the day you feel unattached, that very day go out of the world and away.

To the spiritual seeker the higher values are the first things that come first: to the ordinary man it is otherwise, lower values come first and claim top-most priority. To the experience of the spiritual seeker one should give greater value, for he has the experience of both the values, while the ordinary man knows only of one variety. Naturally, as we have said, there is synthesis

a fusion of the two values; but that is elsewhere for the present, not actually here and now.

VALUES AND THINGS

It is again a point of view to say that things are fundamentally values only, as "philosophers of value" seem to declare today. It would be equally true to say that masses are fundamentally energies or that particles are merely waves. The truth of the matter, here as elsewhere, is global—*ubhayameva*, in the famous phrase of the great Rishi Yajnavalkya. In other words, values and things are aspects, polarisations of one single reality. Things have values: things are values: things are also things.

Value refers to the particular poise or status, the mode of being or function of a thing. In its ultimate formulation we can say it is the rhythm or force of consciousness that vibrates in an object, it is the *becoming* of the *being*: but becoming does not cancel being, it only activises, energises, formulates. The debate brings us back to the ancient quarrel between the Buddhists and the Vedantists, the latter posits *sat*, being or existence, while the former considers *sat* as only an assemblage of *asat*. The object and its function, the thing-in-itself and its attribute (the fire and its burning power, as the Indian logicians used to cite familiarly as an example) are not to be separated—they are not separated in fact but given together as one unified entity; it is the logical mind that separates them artificially.

THE NEW WORLD-IDEAL

That man is not the term of evolution, that intellect is not the supreme expression of human capacity, that this mortal being shall acquire new faculties and powers and become a higher species with a good deal of his present limitations removed are some of the views regarding human destiny held today. At one end are religious and devout people or those who follow a faith and spiritual discipline and at the other end are hard-headed scientific people who go by the evidence of downright facts and figures. There are a considerable number among both the groups and also among all the gradations lying in-between who subscribe, although in various ways, to this *television* we speak of. Catholics who believe in the coming of the Messiah and physicists who believe in re-creation of Matter and Energy, not merely its disintegration, have been equally enthusiastic in upholding this New Faith. There is Berdyaev who is a Christian, there is Gerald Heard who is called a Neo-Brahmin and there is Lecomte du Noüy, the eminent French Bio-physicist.

We see the movement accepted and advanced (if not even initiated) more in the West than in the East. That the world is a progressive and progressing phenomenon comes easily and naturally to the European mind. The East has been habituated to a static view of things: if there is dynamism, it is mostly considered as a movement in a circle. The spiritual East with its obsessing experience of the Infinite and Eternal and Permanent, the Transcendent, found it unnecessary to attach that importance to the impermanent and finite which would give it a meaning and purpose and direction. Therefore we see in India those who advocate this new view are considered Europeanised and not following the authentic spiritual tradition of India.

We, of course, are not of the opinion that all possible revelations in the spiritual sphere have been made and done with even in India or that there cannot be fresh valuations of the old revelations or their applications in a new way. We believe in the words of the ancient Rishis who declared that dawns come endlessly in succession, today's dawn follows the path trod by the ancient ones and is the first of the eternal series to come in the future. Each dawn brings in a new and fresh revelation, a hope and vision looking into the future although linked in with the experiences of the infinite past.

That is why, while we give our support to this new effort of Europe, we agree and even insist that the hoary spiritual tradition of India has still something to teach us moderns, some light to give us in our present predicament. For, although, the ideal is generally admitted in many places, the way to it is not clear. Since Nietzsche spoke of the surpassing of man, many are taken up with the ideal, but the means to effect it remains yet to be discovered: it is still under discussion, at least. As a matter of fact, the goal itself is none too clear and definite: sometimes we think of a saintly transformation of human nature, sometimes the growing power of Intuition, very vaguely and variously defined, replacing or supplementing intellect and thus adding a new asset to man's life and consciousness.

The crucial problem however lies, in a sense, in the way that the goal is to be reached, in the *modus operandi*. How is the higher status, whatever it is, to be brought down, made effective, be established here on earth and in life. Ideals there have been always and many; evidently we do not know how to go about the business and actualise what is thought and dreamed. About the new ideal too suggestions have been made with regard to the path to be followed to reach it and are being tried and tested. Some say a life of inner or ethical discipline, conscious effort on the part of each individual for his own sake is needed: the higher reality must be reached first by a few individuals, it cannot be attained by mass action. Others declare that personal effort will not lead very far; if there is to be a great or fundamental change

in human nature, it is the Divine Grace alone that can bring it about. The surpassing of man is a miracle and only the supreme magician as an Avatara can do it. Others, again, are not prone to believe in a physical Incarnation —somewhat difficult usually for a European mind—but would accept subtler forces or even superior beings, other than the human category, as aids and agents in the working out of the great future.

It is India's great achievement and speciality that she has found the way—the way to all truly high fulfilment. It is Yoga and the Yogic consciousness. Yoga is the science and art of discovering the higher truths, indeed, the highest reality and of living there, not a midway moral elevation only. In its integral view it combines all the three processes mentioned above. The Yogic consciousness seeks to lift the consciousness as high as possible, in fact, to the very highest—it literally means union or identity (with the highest Reality, Spirit or God.) Thus it has the true perception or vision of the forces that act in and upon the world and the powers that decide and is in union with them. The Yogic consciousness and power is also embodied in the Divine Incarnation—for he is Yogeshwara: and in India it is accepted as a commonplace that God descends in a human shape, whenever there is a great crisis and man needs salvaging and salvation. God comes then with all his angels, with the divine host to battle for him and with him to establish the Dharma.

Sri Aurobindo's stand in this field is very definite and clear. The goal or end is clear, and with it the way too. What he envisages is the transformation of Matter and material life, that is to say, neither rejecting it as an impossible thing nor trying to gloss it over with a coat of mental luminosity, but delving into it and cleaning and purifying it, removing its mire and dross wholly and absolutely so that its true divine nature comes out and remains as Nature's highest and fullest expression on earth. That is the goal: the way too is not less characteristic. The total spiritual transformation, the divinisation of Matter is possible, not only possible but inevitable, because it is Matter that wants it, because Matter in its essence, in its true reality is spiritual energy, is the Spirit itself. That is the great secret Sri Aurobindo has brought to light. The ideals in the past for the reclamation of human nature and reformation of human society were tackled with mental and moral powers which were not adequate to the task. Even when the spiritual power was invoked, it was of the static category which is above, aloof, witness and can have at best a kindly look and influence. That the spirit dynamic is involved in Matter and as Matter is a truth that has to be discovered.

The supreme creative power of the Spirit—Truth-Consciousness—Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind. This power is not only up there above,

but it is here below and within Matter. It is a power of Matter itself, its most secret power. Truth-Consciousness or Supermind congealed, solidified or crystallised under certain conditions becomes Matter: now to re-become its own true self and nature is the very drive of Matter, that is the true sense of evolution. The very nature of Matter makes its transformation absolutely inevitable. It obeys no alien force or rule, its achievement means self-fulfilment and therefore it is something destined and, when done, permanent and perfect.

Open your vital generously to the Divine with simple sincerity and thoroughness and keep up the spirit to conquer the vital enemies. So can be established a perfect and integral purity.

* * *

The complete opening of the vital to the Divine leading to its entire converstion and to the transformation of the power in the higher vital and conquest of lower vital movements like greed for food and sexual desire are the necessary conditions for bringing into the physical the principle of eternal youth.

* * *

You must get rid of the rising of the desires in the vital and establish purity in the cells before you can be fit to enjoy divine prosperity.

* * *

A consciousness luminous without obscurity, turned towards the supramental light and full of a supramentalised plasiticity are the conditions for the manifestation of the supramental light upon earth.

* * *

Let an integral offering of your being be the form of your purified worship.

Savitri

BOOK IV

THE BOOK OF BIRTH AND QUEST

CANTO I

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF THE FLAME

A MAENAD of the cycles of desire
Around a Light she must not dare to touch,
Hastening towards a far-off unknown goal
Earth followed the endless journey of the Sun.
A mind but half awake in the swing of the void
On the bosom of Inconscience dreamed out life
And bore this finite world of thought and deed
Across the immobile trance of the Infinite.
A vast immutable silence with her ran:
Prisoner of speed upon a jewelled wheel,
She communed with the mystic heart in Space.
Amid the ambiguous stillness of the stars
She moved towards some undisclosed event
And her rhythm measured the long whirl of Time.
In ceaseless motion round the purple rim
Day after day sped by like coloured spokes,
And through a glamour of shifting hues of air
The seasons drew in linked significant dance
The symbol pageant of the changing year.
Across the burning langour of the soil
Paced Summer with his pomp of violent noons
And stamped his tyranny of torrid light
And the blue seal of a great burnished sky.
Next through its fiery swoon or clotted knot
Rain-tide burst in upon torn wings of heat,
Startled with lightnings air's unquiet drowse,
Lashed with life-giving streams the torpid soil,
Overcast with flare and sound and storm-winged dark
The star-defended doors of heaven's dim sleep,
Or from the gold eye of her paramour

Covered with packed cloud-veils the earth's brown face.
Armies of revolution crossed the time-field,
The clouds' unending march besieged the world,
Tempests' pronunciamentos claimed the sky
And thunder drums announced the embattled gods.
A traveller from unquiet neighbouring seas
The dense maned monsoon rode neighing through earth's hours:
Thick now the emissary javelins:
Enormous lightnings split the horizon's rim
And, hurled from the quarters as from contending camps,
Married heaven's edges steep and bare and blind:
A surge and hiss and onset of huge rain,
The long straight sleet-drift, clamours of winged storm-charge,
Throngs of wind-faces, rushing of wind-feet
Hurrying swept through the prone afflicted plains:
Heaven's waters trailed and dribbled through the drowned land.
Then all was a swift stride, a sibilant race,
Or all was tempest's shout and water's fall.
A dimness sagged on the grey floor of day,
Its dingy sprawling length joined morn to eve
Wallowing in sludge and shower it reached black dark.
Day a half darkness wore as its dull dress.
Light looked into dawn's tarnished glass and met
Its own face there, twin to a half-lit night's:
Downpour and drip and seeping mist swayed all
And turned dry soil to bog and reeking mud:
Earth was a quagmire, heaven a dismal block.
None saw through dank drenched wicks the dungeon sun.
Even when no turmoil vexed air's sombre rest,
Or a faint ray glimmered through weeping clouds
As a sad smile gleams veiled by returning tears,
All promised brightness failed at once denied
Or, soon condemned, died like a brief-lived hope.
Then a last massive deluge thrashed dead mire
And a subsiding mutter left all still,
Or only the muddy creep of sinking floods
Or only a whisper and green toss of trees.
Earth's mood now changed; she lay in lulled repose,
The hours went by with slow contented tread:
A wide and tranquil air remembered peace,

Earth was the comrade of a happy sun.
A calmness neared as of the approach of God,
A light of musing trance lit soil and sky.
And an identity and ecstasy
Filled meditation's solitary heart.
A dream loitered in the dumb mind of Space,
Time opened its chambers of felicity,
An exaltation entered and a hope:
An inmost self looked up to a heavenlier height,
An inmost thought kindled a hidden flame
And the inner sight adored an unseen sun.
Three thoughtful seasons passed with shining tread
And scanning one by one the pregnant hours
Watched for a flame that lurked in luminous depths,
The vigil of some mighty birth to come.
Autumn led in the glory of her moons
And dreamed in the splendour of her lotus pools
And Winter and Dew-time laid their calm cool hands
On Nature's bosom still in a half sleep
And deepened with hues of lax and mellow ease
The tranquil beauty of the waning year.
Then Spring, an ardent lover, leaped through leaves
And caught the earth-bride in his eager clasp;
His advent was a fire of irised hues,
His arms were a circle of the arrival of joy.
His voice was a call to the Transcendent's sphere
Whose secret touch upon our mortal lives
Keeps ever new the thrill that made the world,
Remoulds an ancient sweetness to new shapes
And guards intact unchanged by death and Time
The answer of our hearts to Nature's charm
And keeps for ever new, yet still the same,
The throb that ever wakes to the old delight
And beauty and rapture and the joy to live.
His coming brought the magic and the spell,
At his touch life's tired heart grew glad and young;
He made joy a willing prisoner in her breast.
His grasp was a young god's upon earth's limbs:
Changed by the passion of his divine outbreak
He made her body beautiful with his kiss.

Impatient for felicity he came,
High-fluting with the coïl's happy voice,
His peacock turban trailing on the trees;
His breath was a warm summons to delight,
The dense voluptuous azure was his gaze.
A soft celestial urge surprised the blood
Rich with the instinct of God's sensuous joys;
Revealed in beauty, a cadence was abroad
Insistent on the rapture-thrill in life:
Immortal movements touched the fleeting hours.
A godlike packed intensity of sense
Made it a passionate pleasure even to breathe;
All sights and voices wove a single charm.
The life of the enchanted globe became
A storm of sweetness and of light and song,
A revel of colour and of ecstasy,
A hymn of rays, a litany of cries:
A strain of choral priestly music sang
And, swung on the swaying censer of the trees,
A sacrifice of perfume filled the hours.
Asocas burned in crimson spots of flame,
Pure like the breath of an unstained desire
White jasmines haunted the enamoured air,
Pale mango-blossoms fed the liquid voice
Of the love-maddened coïl, and the brown bee
Muttered in fragrance mid the honey-buds.
The sunlight was a great god's golden smile.
All Nature was at beauty's festival.

In this high signal moment of the gods
Answering earth's yearning and her cry for bliss
A greatness from our other countries came.
A silence in the noise of earthly things
Immutably revealed the secret Word,
A mightier influx filled the oblivious clay:
A lamp was lit, a sacred image made.
A mediating ray had touched the earth
Bridging the gulf between man's mind and God's;
Translating heaven into a human shape
Its brightness linked our transience to the Unknown.

A spirit of its celestial source aware
Descended into earth's imperfect mould
And wept not fallen to mortality,
But looked on all with large and tranquil eyes.
One had returned from the transcendent planes
And bore anew the load of mortal breath,
Who had striven of old with our darkness and our pain;
She took again her divine unfinished task:
Survivor of death and the aeonic years,
Once more with her fathomless heart she fronted Time.
Again there was renewed, again revealed
The ancient closeness by earth-vision veiled,
The secret contact broken off in Time,
A consanguinity of earth and heaven,
Between the human portion toiling here
And an as yet unborn and limitless Force.
Again the mystic deep attempt began,
The daring wager of the cosmic game.
For since upon this blind and whirling globe
Earth-plasm first quivered with the illumining mind
And life invaded the material sheath
Afflicting Inconscience with the need to feel,
Since in Infinity's silence woke a word,
A Mother wisdom works in Nature's breast
To pour delight on the heart of toil and want
And press perfection on life's stumbling powers,
Impose heaven-sentience on the obscure abyss
And make dumb Matter conscious of its God.
Although our fallen minds forget to climb,
Although our human stuff resists or breaks,
She keeps her will that hopes to divinise clay;
Failure cannot repress, defeat o'erthrow;
Time cannot weary her nor the Void subdue,
The ages have not made her passion less;
No victory she admits of Death or Fate.
Always she drives the souls to new attempt;
Always her magical infinitude
Forces to aspire the inert brute elements;
As one who has all infinity to waste,
She scatters the seed of the Eternal's strength

On a half-animate and crumbling mould,
Plants heaven's delight in the heart's passionate mire,
Pours godhead's seekings into a bare beast frame,
Hides immortality in a mask of death.
Once more that Will put on an earthly shape.
A Mind empowered from Truth's immutable seat
Was framed for vision and interpreting act
And instruments were sovereignly designed
To express divinity in terrestrial signs.
Outlined by the pressure of this new descent
A lovelier body formed than earth had known.
As yet a prophecy only and a hint,
The glowing arc of a charmed unseen whole,
It came into the sky of mortal life
Bright like the crescent horn of a gold moon
Returning in a faint illumined eve.
At first glimmering like an unshaped idea
Passive she lay sheltered in wordless sleep,
Involved and drowned in Matter's giant trance,
An infant heart of the deep-caved world-plan
In cradle of divine inconscience rocked
By the universal ecstasy of the suns.
Some missioned Power in the half-wakened frame
Nursed a transcendent birth's dumb glorious seed
For which this vivid tenement was made.
But soon the link of soul with form grew sure;
Flooded was the dim cave with slow conscient light,
The seed grew into a delicate marvellous bud,
The bud disclosed a great and heavenly bloom.
At once she seemed to found a mightier race.
Arrived upon the strange and dubious globe
The child remembering inly a far home
Lived guarded in her spirit's luminous cell,
Alone mid men in her diviner kind.
Even in her childish movements could be felt
The nearness of a light still kept from earth,
Feelings that only eternity could share,
Thoughts natural and native to the gods.
As needing nothing but its own rapt flight
Her nature dwelt in a strong separate air

Like a strange bird with large rich-coloured breast
That sojourns on a secret fruited bough
Lost in the emerald glory of the woods
Or flies above divine unreachable tops.
Harmoniously she impressed the earth with heaven.
Aligned to a swift rhythm of sheer delight
And singing to themselves her days went by;
Each minute was a throb of beauty's heart,
The hours were tuned to a sweet-toned content
Which asked for nothing, but took all life gave
Sovereignly as her nature's inborn right.
Near was her spirit to its parent Sun,
The Breath within to the eternal joy.
The first fair life that breaks from Nature's swoon,
Mounts in a line of rapture to the skies;
Absorbed in its own happy urge it lives,
Sufficient to itself, yet turned to all.
It has no seen communion with its world,
No open converse with surrounding things.
There is a oneness native and occult
That needs no instruments and erects no form;
In unison it grows with all that is,
All contacts it assumes into its trance,
Laugh-tossed consents to the wind's kiss and takes
Transmutingly the shocks of sun and breeze:
A blissful yearning riots in its leaves,
A magic passion trembles in its blooms,
Its boughs aspire in hushed felicity.
An occult godhead of this beauty is cause,
The spirit and intimate guest of all this charm,
This sweetness's priestess and this reverie's muse.
Invisibly protected from our sense
The Dryad lives drenched in a deeper ray
And feels another air of storms and calms
And quivers inwardly with mystic rain.
This at a heavenlier height was shown in her.
Even when she bent to meet earth's intimacies
Her spirit kept the stature of the gods;
It stooped but was not lost in Matter's reign.
A world translated was her gleaming mind,

And marvel-mooned bright crowding fantasies
Fed with spiritual sustenance of dreams
The ideal goddess in her house of gold.
Aware of forms to which our eyes are closed,
Conscious of nearnesses we cannot feel,
The Power within her shaped her moulding sense
In deeper figures than our surface types.
An invisible sunlight ran within her veins
And flooded her brain with heavenly brilliancies
That woke a wider sight than earth could know.
Outlined in the sincerity of that ray
Her springing childlike thoughts were richly turned
Into luminous patterns of her soul's deep truth,
And from her eyes she cast another look
On all around her than man's ignorant view.
All objects were to her shapes of living selves
And she perceived a message from her kin
In each awakening touch of outward things.
Each was a symbol power, a vivid flash
In the circuit of infinities half-known;
Nothing was alien or inanimate,
Nothing without its meaning or its call.
For with a greater Nature she was one.
As from the soil sprang glory of branch and flower,
As from the animal's life rose thinking man,
A new epiphany appeared in her.
A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god;
And when the slow rhyme of the expanding years
And the rich murmurous swarm-work of the days
Had honey-packed her sense and filled her limbs,
Accomplishing the moon-orb of her grace,
Self-guarded in the silence of her strength
Her solitary greatness was not less.
Nearer the godhead to the surface pressed,
A sun replacing childhood's nebula
Sovereign in a blue and lonely sky.
Upward it rose to grasp the human scene:
The strong Inhabitant turned to watch her field,

A lovelier light assumed her spirit brow
And sweet and solemn grew her musing gaze;
Celestial-human deep warm slumbrous fires
Woke in the long fringed glory of her eyes
Like altar-burnings in a mysteried shrine.
Out of those crystal windows gleamed a will
That brought a large significance to life.
Holding her forehead's candid stainless space
Behind the student arch a noble power
Of wisdom looked from light on transient things.
A scout of victory in a vigil tower,
Her aspiration called high destiny down;
A silent warrior paced in her city of strength
Inviolate, guarding Truth's diamond throne.
A nectarous haloed moon her passionate heart
Loved all and spoke no word and made no sign,
But kept her bosom's rapturous secrecy
A blissful ardent moved and voiceless world.
Proud, swift and joyful ran the wave of life
Within her like a stream in Paradise.
Many high gods dwelt in one beautiful home;
Yet was her nature's orb a perfect whole,
Harmonious like a chant with many tones,
Immense and various like a universe.
The body that held this greatness seemed almost
An image made of heaven's transparent light.
Its charm recalled things seen in vision's hours,
A golden bridge spanning a faery flood,
A moon-touched palm tree single by a lake
Companion of the wide and glimmering peace,
A murmur as of leaves in Paradise
Moving when feet of the Immortals pass,
A fiery halo over sleeping hills,
A strange and starry head alone in Night.

END OF CANTO ONE

Sri Aurobindo

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

(*A Letter*)

YOU have expressed in one of your letters your sense of the present darkness in the world round us and this must have been one of the things that contributed to your being so badly upset and unable immediately to repel the attack. For myself, the dark conditions do not discourage me or convince me of the vanity of my will to "help the world", for I knew they had to come; they were there in the world-nature and had to rise up so that they might be exhausted or expelled and a better world freed from them might be there. After all, something has been done in the outer field and that may help or prepare for getting something done in the inner field also. For instance, India is free and her freedom was necessary if the Divine Work was to be done. The difficulties that surround her now and may increase for a time, especially with regard to the Pakistan imbroglio, were also things that had to come and to be cleared out. Here too there is sure to be a full clearance, though unfortunately, a considerable amount of human suffering in the process is inevitable. Afterwards, the work for the Divine will become more possible and it may well be that the dream, if it is a dream, of leading the world towards the spiritual light, may even become a reality. So I am not disposed even now, in these dark conditions, to consider my will to help the world as condemned to failure.

This attack upon you, the depression and nervous upset were part of a general attack which has been raging against us from the adverse forces from some time past, but I hope that the worst of it is over for you and that you will be able to go on untroubled in your sadhana. Certainly, I will do all I can to help you to realise Krishna. There is nothing I want for you more than that, for the realisation of the Divine is the one thing needful and the rest is desirable only in so far as it helps or leads towards that or, when it is realised, extends or manifests the realisation. Manifestation or organisation of the whole life for the Divine Work,—first, the sadhana, personal and collective, necessary for the realisation and a common life of the God-realised men, secondly, for help to the world to move towards that, and to live in the Light,—is the whole meaning and purpose of my Yoga. But the realisation is the first need and it is that round which all the rest moves, for apart from it all the rest would have no meaning. Neither the Mother nor myself ever

dreamed or could dream of putting anything else in its place or neglecting it for anything else.

I may stress one point, however, that there need not be only one way to the realisation of the Divine. If one does not succeed or has not yet succeeded in reaching him, feeling him or seeing him by the established process of meditation or by processes like *japa*, yet one may have made progress towards it by the frequent calling of *bhakti* in the heart or a constantly greater enlargement of it in the consciousness or by work for the Divine and by dedication in service. . . . The path of surrender is indeed difficult, but if one perseveres in it with sincerity, there is bound to be some success and a partial overcoming or diminution of the ego which may help greatly a further advance upon the way. One must learn to go forward on the path of Yoga, as the Gita insists, with a consciousness free from despondency, *anirvinnena chetasa*. Even if one slips, one must rectify the posture; even if one falls, one has to rise and go undiscouraged on the Divine Way. The attitude must be: "The Divine has promised Himself to me if I cleave to Him always; that I will never cease to do whatever may come."

Sri Aurobindo

"Lord, Lord, everywhere Thy enemies are triumphant; falsehood is the monarch of the world; life without Thee is death, a perpetual hell; doubt has usurped the place of Hope and revolt has pushed out submission; Faith is spent, Gratitude is not born; blind passions and murderous instincts and a guilty weakness have covered and stifled Thy sweet law of love. Lord, wilt Thou permit Thy enemies to prevail, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there.

I know we are unworthy, I know the world is not yet ready. But I cry to Thee with an absolute faith in Thy Grace and I know that Thy Grace will save us."

Thus my prayer rushed up towards Thee; and, from the depths of the abyss I beheld Thee in Thy radiant splendour; Thou didst appear and Thou saidst to me: "Lose not courage, be firm, be confident,—I come."

"Prayers and Meditations of the Mother"

LOVE AND THE TRIPLE PATH*

WILL, knowledge and love are the three divine powers in human nature and the life of man, and they point to the three paths by which the human soul rises to the Divine. The integrality of them, the union of man with God in all the three must therefore, as we have seen, be the foundation of an integral Yoga.

Action is the first power of life. Nature begins with force and its works which, once conscious in man, become will and its achievements; therefore it is that, by turning his action Godwards, the life of man best and most surely begins to become divine. It is the door of first access, the starting-point of the initiation. When the will in him is made one with the divine Will and the whole action of the being proceeds from the Divine and is directed towards the Divine, the union in works is perfectly accomplished. But works fulfil themselves in knowledge; all the totality of works, says the Gita, finds its rounded culmination in knowledge, *sarvam karmakhilam jnane parisamapyate*. By union in will and works we become one in the omnipresent conscious Being from whom all our will and works have their rise and draw their power and in whom they fulfil the round of their energies. And the crown of this union is love; for love is the delight of conscious union with the Being in whom we live, act and move, by whom we exist, for whom alone we learn in the end to act and to be. That is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God, to which we arrive when we start from works as our way of access and our line of contact.

Knowledge is the foundation of a constant living in the Divine. For consciousness is the foundation of all living and being, and knowledge is the action of the consciousness, the light by which it knows itself and its realities, the power by which, starting from action, we are able to hold the inner results of thought and act in a firm growth of our conscious being until it accomplishes itself, by union, in the infinity of the divine being. The Divine meets us in many aspects and to each of them knowledge is the key, so that by knowledge we enter into and possess the infinite and Divine in every way of his being, *sarvabhavena*,[1] and receive him into us and are possessed by him in every way of ours.

* *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part II (The Yoga of Divine Love), Chapter I.

[1] *Gita*.

Without knowledge we live blindly in him with the blindness of the power of Nature intent on its works, but forgetful of its source and possessor, undivinely therefore, deprived of the real, the full delight of our being. By knowledge arriving at conscious oneness with that which we know,—for by identity alone can complete and real knowledge exist—the division is healed and the cause of all our limitation and discord and weakness and discontent is abolished. But knowledge is not complete without works; for the Will in being also is God and not the being or its self-aware silent existence alone, and if works find their culmination in knowledge, knowledge also finds its fulfilment in works. And, here too, love is the crown of knowledge; for love is the delight of union, and unity must be conscious of joy of union to find all the riches of its own delight. Perfect knowledge indeed leads to perfect love, integral knowledge to a rounded and multitudinous richness of love. "He who knows me", says the Gita, " as the supreme Purusha"—not only as the immutable oneness, but in the many-souled movement of the Divine and as that, superior to both, in which both are divinely held,—"he, because he has the integral knowledge, seeks me by love in every way of his being." This is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start from knowledge.

Love is the crown of all being and its way of fulfilment, that by which it rises to all intensity and all fullness and the ecstasy of utter self-finding. For if the Being is in its very nature consciousness and by consciousness we become one with it, therefore by perfect knowledge of it fulfilled in identity, yet is delight the nature of consciousness, and of the acme of delight love is the key and the secret. And if will is the power of conscious being by which it fulfils itself and by union in will we become one with the Being in its characteristic infinite power, yet all the works of that power start from delight, live in the delight, have delight for their aim and end; love of the Being in itself and in all of itself that its power of consciousness manifests is the way to the perfect wideness of the Ananda. Love is the power and passion of the divine self-delight and without love we may get the rapt peace of its infinity, the absorbed silence of the Ananda, but not its absolute depth of richness and fullness. Love leads us from the suffering of division into the bliss of perfect union, but without losing that joy of the act of union which is the soul's greatest discovery and for which the life of the cosmos is a long preparation. Therefore to approach God by love is to prepare oneself for the greatest possible spiritual fulfilment.

Love fulfilled does not exclude knowledge, but itself brings knowledge; and the completer the knowledge, the richer the possibility of love. "By

Bhakti", says the Lord in the Gita, "shall a man know Me in all my extent and greatness and as I am in the principles of my being, and when he has known Me in the principles of my being, then he enters into Me." Love without knowledge is a passionate and intense, but blind, crude, often dangerous thing, a great power, but also a stumbling-block; love, limited in knowledge, condemns itself in its fervour and often by its very fervour to narrowness; but love leading to perfect knowledge brings the infinite and absolute union. Such love is not inconsistent with, but rather throws itself with joy into, divine works; for it loves God and is one with him in all his being, and therefore in all beings, and to work for the world is then to feel and fulfil multitudinously one's love for God. This is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start on our journey by the path of devotion, with Love for the Angel of the Way, to find in the ecstasy of the divine delight of the All-Lover's being the fulfilment of ours, its secure home and blissful abiding-place and the centre of its universal radiation.

Since, then, in the union of these three powers lies our base of perfection, the seeker of an integral self-fulfilment in the Divine must avoid or throw away, if he has them at all, the misunderstanding and mutual depreciation which we often find existent between the followers of the three paths. Those who have the cult of knowledge seem often, if not to despise, yet to look downward from their dizzy eminence on the path of the devotee as if it were a thing inferior, ignorant, good only for souls that are not yet ready for the heights of the Truth. It is true that devotion without knowledge is often a thing raw, crude, blind and dangerous, as the errors, crimes, follies of the religious have too often shown. But this is because devotion in them has not found its own path, its own real principle, has not therefore really entered on the path, but is fumbling and feeling after it, is on one of the bypaths that lead to it; and knowledge too at this stage is as imperfect as devotion,—dogmatic, schismatic, intolerant, bound up in the narrowness of some single and exclusive principle, even that being usually very imperfectly seized. When the devotee has grasped the power that shall raise him, has really laid hold on love, that in the end purifies and enlarges him as effectively as knowledge can; they are equal powers, though their methods of arriving at the same goal are different. The pride of the philosopher looking down on the passion of the devotee arises, as does all pride, from a certain deficiency of his nature; for the intellect, too exclusively developed, misses what the heart has to offer. The intellect is not in every way superior to the heart; if it opens more readily doors at which the heart is apt to fumble in vain, it is itself apt to miss truths which to the heart are very near and easy

to hold. And if, when the way of thought deepens into spiritual experience, it arrives readily at the etherial heights, pinnacles, skyey widenesses, it cannot without the aid of the heart fathom the intense and rich abysses and oceanic depths of the divine being and the divine Ananda.

The way of Bhakti is supposed often to be necessarily inferior because it proceeds by worship which belongs to that stage of spiritual experience where there is a difference, an insufficient unity between the human soul and the Divine, because its very principle is love and love means always two, the lover and the beloved, a dualism therefore, while oneness is the highest spiritual experience, and because it seeks after the personal God while the Impersonal is the highest and the eternal truth, if not even the sole Reality. But worship is only the first step on the path of devotion. Where external worship changes into the inner adoration, real Bhakti begins; that deepens into the intensity of divine love; that love leads to the joy of closeness in our relations with the Divine; the joy of closeness passes into the bliss of union. Love too, as well as knowledge, brings us to a highest oneness and it gives to that oneness its greatest possible depth and intensity. It is true that love returns gladly upon a difference in oneness, by which the oneness itself becomes richer and sweeter. But here we may say that the heart is wiser than the thought, at least than that thought which fixes upon opposite ideas of the Divine and concentrates on one to the exclusion of the other which seems its contrary, but is really its complement and a means of its greatest fulfilment. This is the weakness of the mind that it limits itself by its thoughts, its positive and negative ideas, the aspects of the Divine Reality that it sees, and tends too much to pit one against the other.

Thought in the mind, *vichara*, the philosophic trend by which mental knowledge approaches the Divine, is apt to lend a greater importance to the abstract over the concrete, to that which is high and remote over that which is intimate and near. It finds a greater truth in the delight of the One in itself, a lesser truth or even a falsehood in the delight of the One in the Many and of the Many in the One, a greater truth in the impersonal and the Nirguna, a lesser truth or a falsehood in the personal and the Saguna. But the Divine is beyond our oppositions of ideas, beyond the logical contradictions we make between his aspects. He is not, we have seen, bound and restricted by exclusive unity; his oneness realises itself in infinite variation and to the joy of that, love has the completest key, without therefore missing the joy of the unity. The highest knowledge and highest spiritual experience by knowledge find his oneness as perfect in his various relations with the Many as in his self-absorbed delight. If to thought the Impersonal seems the wider and higher truth, the Personal a narrower experience, the spirit finds both

of them to be aspects of a Reality which figures itself in both, and if there is a knowledge of that Reality to which thought arrives by insistence on the infinite Impersonality, there is also a knowledge of it to which love arrives by insistence on the infinite Personality. The spiritual experience of each leads, if followed to the end, to the same ultimate Truth. By Bhakti as by knowledge, as the Gita tells us, we arrive at unity with the Purushottama, the Supreme who contains in himself the impersonal and numberless personalities, the qualitiless and infinite qualities, pure being, consciousness and delight and the endless play of their relations.

The devotee, on the other hand, tends to look down on the sawdust dryness of mere knowledge. And it is true that philosophy by itself without the rapture of spiritual experience is something as dry as it is clear and cannot give all the satisfaction we seek; that its spiritual experience even, when it has not left its supports of thought and shot up beyond the mind, lives too much in an abstract delight and that what it reaches is not indeed the void it seems to the passion of the heart, but still has the limitations of the peaks. On the other hand, love itself is not complete without knowledge. The Gita distinguishes between three initial kinds of Bhakti, that which seeks refuge in the Divine from the sorrows of the world, *arta*; that which, desiring, approahces the Divine as the giver of its good, *artharthi*; and that which attracted by what it already loves, but does not yet know, yearns to know this divine Unknown, *jijnasu*; but it gives the palm to the Bhakti that knows. Evidently the intensity of passion which says, "I do not understand, I love," and, loving, cares not to understand, is not love's last self-expression, but its first, nor is it its highest intensity. Rather as knowledge of the Divine grows, delight in the Divine and love of it must increase. Nor can mere rapture be secure without the foundation of knowledge; to live in what we love gives that security, and to live in it means to be one with it in consciousness, and oneness of consciousness is the perfect condition of knowledge. Knowledge of the Divine gives to love of the Divine its firmest security, opens to it its own widest joy of experience, raises it to its highest pinnacles of outlook.

If the misunderstandings of these two powers are an ignorance, no less so is the tendency of both to look down on the way of works as inferior to their own loftier pitch of spiritual achievement. There is an intensity of love, as there is an intensity of knowledge, to which works seem something outward and distracting. But works are only thus outward and distracting when we have not found oneness of will and consciousness with the Supreme. When once that is found, works become the very power of knowledge and the very outpouring of love. If knowledge is the very state of oneness

and love its bliss, divine works are the living power of its light and sweetness. There is a movement of love, as in the aspiration of human love, to separate the lover and the loved in the enjoyment of their exclusive oneness away from the world and from all others, shut up in the nuptial chambers of the heart. That is perhaps an inevitable movement of this path. But still, the widest love fulfilled in knowledge sees the world not as something other and hostile to this joy, but as the being of the Beloved and all creatures as his being, and in that vision divine works find their joy and their justification.

This is the knowledge in which an integral Yoga must live. We have to start Godward from the powers of the mind, the intellect, the will, the heart, and in the mind all is limited. Limitations, exclusiveness there can hardly fail to be at the beginning and for a long time on the way. But an integral Yoga will wear these more loosely than more exclusive ways of seeking, and it will sooner emerge from the mental necessity. It may commence with the way of love, as with the way of knowledge or of works; but where they meet, is the beginning of its joy of fulfilment. Love it cannot miss. It does not start from it; for love is the crown of works and the flowering of knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE MOTHER ON YOGIC ACTION

(II)

THE formula of Yogic action is twofold: action for Yoga and action in Yoga. The essential object of Yogic action is, therefore, Yoga or union. Most of the schools of dynamic Yoga in the world—and they are not many—occupy themselves only with the first formula and its realization —action for Yoga. They explore some of the possibilities of disinterested and consecrated action for a speedy attainment of union with the object of their seeking, whoever and whatever that may be. Once that is done, once the central consciousness has discovered and learned to live in the infinite Reality or the Eternal Being, the object of Yoga is thought to have been achieved, and action is then relegated to a very subordinate position. It reflects, indifferently, sometimes the ethical being, sometimes the liberated soul, sometimes even the simmering or settled turbidity of the subconscient, and seldom, if at all, the undeflected Will of the Supreme. Even if clarity and rhythm are achieved in the outer nature, they are maintained at a great cost of unflagging vigilance and circumspection, and one is never as free and self-possessed in action as in inaction. To overcome this drawback, the second formula has to be lived to the utmost possible perfection—action in Yoga. The Union attained at the centre has to be extended to the most physical peripheries of the being and plunged into the unlit profundities of the subconscient, so that the Will of God may make itself easily felt and powerfully and perfectly expressed in life.

The Will of God, the direct, unimpeded, undiminished, undistorted will of God is the fount and fulcrum of all authentic Yogic action. It may reveal itself in various ways:—

1) as an intermittent drive strongly or faintly felt and working itself out in the nature of the Yogin with the why and the how of its action rather obscure;

2) as a phosphorescent impulsion with a modicum of knowledge of the why and the how, but little of the result;

3) as a luminous, fully conscious direction lighting up the whole process and result of the action.

These ways sometimes alternate and sometimes combine and make up the complex working of the divine Will in the Yogin till the channel has been completely cleared and tempered for its direct, uninterrupted self-fulfilment.

The self-expression of the supreme Will, which is the sole end of Yogic action, depends upon a variety of factors which a Karmayogin has to tackle with an intent, receptive flexibility and a subtle, discerning tact. It depends not only upon the completeness and constancy of his identification with the supreme Consciousness, but also—and probably more—upon the state of his normal active consciousness and the fitness and unfitness of the dynamic parts of his nature. If there are twists and hurdles in his nature and his normal consciousness is not immune to the inroads of the forces of ignorance, the Will cannot act in its purity and undiluted potency. An immixture takes place, and though the action may be felt as inspired or impelled from within or above, it does not carry on it the hall-mark of the divine Will.

How to incarnate the divine Will and let it express itself freely and effectively in life? This is the central problem of a dynamic Yoga, and the Mother gives us an inestimable guidance in it.

"In my view the ideal state is that in which, constantly conscious with Thy Consciousness, we know at every moment, spontaneously, without any necessity of reflection, exactly what we should do to express in the best way Thy law. I know this state because I have been in it at certain moments, but very often the knowledge of the "how" is veiled by a mist of ignorance and we have to appeal to reflection which is not always a good counsellor, not to speak of all that we do every moment, without having time for reflection, being at the mercy of the inspiration of the moment. In what measure is it in conformity with or contrary to Thy law? All depends on the state of the subconscient, on what is active in it at the moment. Once the act is accomplished, if it has any importance, if we can look at it, analyse it, understand it, it serves as a lesson, enables us to be aware of the motive force which has made us act, and so of something of that subconscient which still governs us and has to be mastered.

It is impossible that in every terrestrial action there should not be a good and a bad side. Even the actions which best express the most divine law of Love contain in them something of the disorder and darkness inherent in the world as it is at present.

Some men, those who are called pessimists, perceive almost solely the dark side of everything. The optimists, on the contrary, see only the side of beauty and harmony. And if it is ridiculous and ignorant to be an involuntary optimist, is it not a happy conquest to be made to become a voluntary optimist? In the eyes of the pessimists, whatever one does will be always bad, ignorant or egoistic; how could one satisfy them? It is an impossible enterprise.

There is only one resource—it is to unite ourselves as perfectly as we can with the highest and purest light we can conceive of, to identify our consciousness as completely as possible with the absolute Consciousness, to strive to receive all inspiration from it alone, in order to facilitate as best we can its manifestation upon the earth, and, confident of its power, consider the events with serenity. Since everything is necessarily mixed in the present manifestation, it is wisest to do our best, striving towards a higher and higher light, and to resign ourselves to the fact that absolute perfection is for the moment unrealizable.

Still with what an ardour should we not always aspire towards this inaccessible perfection!"[1]

The implications of the Mother's teaching in this Prayer favour our initial postulate of the twofold nature of Yogic action. The dual formula corresponds, we can say with more or less precision, to the double movement of the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo—the movement of ascent and the movement of descent. The first movement is a movement of spontaneous self-offering through action, as well as through love and knowledge. Yoga or union with the supreme Consciousness is the goal towards which the most developed and aspiring part of our consciousness shoots with a greater and greater intensity. Each action is undertaken and accomplished in the spirit of an offering, a sacrifice, which brings about a releasing reversal of the desire-ridden, egoistic poise of the being and its entry into a super-personal wideness. Nothing is done for the satisfaction and aggrandizement of the ego, but all for the love and worship of the One with whom a conscious and constant union is consumingly sought for. This sincere and unremitting self-giving through action works as a great purifying force and with the increase of purity and elimination of desires and attachments, there is felt more and more a natural, irresistible tendency towards a liberating self-transcendence and approximation to the Eternal and the Infinite. This experience of a progressive self-transcendence is usually accompanied, in the dynamic Yoga which the Mother has in view, by an increasing perception of a serene, subtly impelling Will, and the tormenting goad of egoistic desires is replaced, by slow or swift stages, as the case may be, by its developing direction.

The movement of ascent—the inner plunge and the subsequent climb—admits of many possibilities of descent. Sometimes the two movements alternate and enrich each other—a downpour from above bathes the climber

[1] *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, pp. 83-84.

and refreshes and invigorates him on his upward way, just as an ascent induces a delivering descent. But this is not, according to the Mother, a very high, let alone the ideal state. In it the divine Will can manifest itself but intermittently and with a modified force.

For a glimpse of the ideal state, as the Mother envisages it here, and as many of her later experiences fully illustrate, and the other two inferior states from which a God-seeker may also act sometimes, let us draw a little closer to the Prayer.

The ideal state is that in which the consciousness of the Yogin is united with the absolute consciousness of the Divine. It is a state in which "we know at every moment, spontaneously, without any necessity of reflection, exactly what we should do to express in the best way Thy law." The divine Will is known luminously, integrally and unerringly, and no necessity is felt for resorting to reflection. "At the moment when the being becomes aware of Thy Presence and identifies itself with Thy consciousness, it is conscious in everything and everywhere." But the duration of this supreme consciousness is fugitive. Why? It can be explained by the "complexity of the elements of the being, by their inequality in the illumination and by the fact that they enter successively into activity." Before we attempt any elaboration, it would be advisable, because helpful, to make ourselves clear as to what the Mother means by "Thy Consciousness". The absolute divine Consciousness of which the Mother speaks is not the supracosmic, incommunicable Consciousness which is the ultimate goal of some traditional Yogas, but the supreme, integral divine Consciousness which is everywhere and everything in the universe as well as beyond it. No dynamic Yoga can proceed on the conception of the incommunicable, relationless Transcendent as the goal; for, in the relationless Absolute there is no stirring of the Will to self-creation and self-expression. What the Mother means by the Absolute Consciousness is the all-comprehending Consciousness of the Supreme Being, the One without a second, the supreme Purusha who is beyond even the Unmanifest, as the Upanishad describes Him with a disarming definiteness. In Him is the omnipotent Will to eternal self-multiplication and self-manifestation as well as the timeless silence of the absolute immutability. To be identified with Him, integrally, that is to say, physically, vitally, mentally and spiritually, is the sole condition of expressing His will or rather letting it express itself in the material world. It is to become "a pure crystal without stain which allows Thy divine ray to pass without obscuring, colouring or deforming it."

How to realize this identification with the Supreme Purusha? The Mother gives a very concentrated idea of it in the Prayer of the 27th May, 1914:—

"In each of the domains of the being, we must awaken the consciousness to the perfect existence, knowledge and beatitude. These three worlds or modes of the Divine are found in the physical reality as well as in the regions of Force and Light and those of impersonality, infinitude and eternity. When we enter fully conscious into the higher regions, it is easy, almost inevitable, to live this existence, this light and this beatitude. But what is very important, as also very difficult, is to awaken the being to this triple divine consciousness on the most material levels. This is the first point. Then we must find out the centre of all the divine worlds (probably in the intermediate world), from where we can unite the consciousness of these divine worlds, synthetize them and act simultaneously and in full knowledge in all the domains."

Was it the unimaginable difficulty of this integral union and divine manifestation that led the spiritual seekers to discover a short cut and turn vertiginously to the static Impersonal? Or was it that this comprehensive ideal had been lost to the contracting consciousness of humanity and that an intensive churning of the material levels had become an imperative need of the evolutionary Nature? But the Mother would have us shun the easy paths and "aspire towards this inaccessible perfection", short of which nothing can satisfy our deepest aspiration.

This integral union in the waking, active consciousness of man is usually and unavoidably fugitive in as much as "everything is necessarily mixed in the present manifestation" and disorder and darkness are "inherent in the world as it is at present." The absolute perfection of the individual depends upon the perfection of the collectivity of which he is an inseparable part, and the perfection of the collectivity is the great end which the divine Force has been working out through the evolutionary process of Nature and revolutionary Yoga.

The first cause of the fugitiveness of this union is, as the Mother explains it, the complexity of the elements of our multi-dimensional being. There are elements within elements, world within world, *jagatyām jagat*, interwoven and interacting, each of which has to be sedulously and patiently weaned from the disorder and darkness of ignorance and brought into perfect accord with the supreme Consciousness and its Will; for, each, in its essence, is derived from that Consciousness and is a note indispensable to the final diapason in creation.

"So long as one element of the being, one movement of thought is still subjected to outside influences, that is to say, not solely under Thine, it

cannot be said that the true union is realized; there is still the horrible mixture without order and light; for, that element, that movement is a world, a world of disorder and darkness, as is the entire earth in the material world, as is the material world in the entire universe."[1]

The second cause is "their inequality in the illumination", as the Mother puts it. Some elements may have been purified and transmuted enough to enter into the Unitive Life, but others may be still lingering in the twilight, slackers and stragglers of the rear-guard, fighting shy of the total conversion. This inequality in the very constituents of the being retard the fulness and permanence of the Union.

The third cause is that these elements enter successively and not simultaneously into the integrating and sublimating action of the Yoga. In the wise dispensation of Providence the spiritual life, as indeed all life, is so arranged that no element of it is hustled into a premature conversion, but each is given its proper time and opportunity to grow and evolve into the supreme identification. Today it is one part of the being or one group of elements seeking illumination and submitting to its transforming rhythm, and tomorrow it is another, which entails a long preparation for the final resolution of all their discords and disparities into the conquering harmony of the progressive Union. A simultaneous utilization of all the elements in perfect concordance is possible only when the whole human consciousness rests in the supreme Consciousness and the whole human nature is possessed and moved by it.

We have seen what is the ideal state of integral Union in which the divine Will expresses itself in its native purity and omnipotence. There are two other states from which the Yogin has to act in the immature stages of his sadhana. The first state, as the Mother indicates it, is that in which the knowledge of the "how" is veiled by "a mist of ignorance" and one has perforce to appeal to reflection. But reflection "is not always a good counsellor", for, it bases its operations on the crystallized experiences of the mind and the prima facie evidences of the senses, on the one hand, and, on the other, on inference and imagination. The data of the senses being, more often than not, misleading and confusing, and imagination usually not a very reliable truth-finder, reflection labours under certain inherent disabilities and cannot be a safe guide of man on the path of Yoga. Its judgment at a given moment depends upon the being's psychological poise and orientation and the stress of the forces at work in it. Even at its best,

[1] *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 6

reflection can give but a poor and precarious lead and can never be a substitute for intuition, born of the divine identification.

The second state is that in which action is impelled by the inspiration of the moment, and the being has neither any steady light of intuition to lead it nor time to take the help of reflection. This action may be flawless and authentically Yogic, but also it may not be—it all depends upon the then state of the being's subconscient. If the subconscient is pure and calm, the divine inspiration may be received undeformed, but if it is full of impurities and obscure movements, the inspiration received may be a false one, and the action can only betray the riot and reek of the sub-soil. Besides, reflection is smothered in the rush and tumult of the nether energies and the dynamic parts of the being lie helplessly at the mercy of the moment's impulsion. This is a movement of the unregenerate personality of man which is a creation and tool of the lower nature and trails evil and falsehood as the dark heritage of Matter. But from the Yogic standpoint even this retrograde movement has a utility: it affords the Yogin a glimpse of the hidden working of his nature and of the elements and energies which have to be exposed to the light, purified and transformed. The Yogin cannot rest content with a surface polish and refinement of his nature; he is not concerned to put up a presentable appearance in society, but to weed out the obstinate remnants of his inconscient origin and build up a nature invulnerably pure and divinely dynamic. He has, therefore, to face and conquer and convert the obscure forces that lie below the threshold and surprise him by their sporadic incursions. He takes advantage even of all his stumbles and detours to effect a solid and secure progress. Not the eye outside but the eye within is his guide, and woe unto him who slurs or glosses over the nether upsurges of his nature.

In the light of the Mother's teaching we learn, then, that the prime object of Yogic action is the constant realization and fulfilment of the divine Will in all the multifarious details of life. An unceasing self-surrender through action as well as through love and knowledge inevitably culminates in an integral union and identification of our whole being with the supreme Consciousness, and it is out of this blissful Union that the all-achieving Will blazes forth and fulfils itself in the material world. One of the Mother's experiences, recorded on September 17, 1914, gives an illustration of such a union:—

"No longer can any impulse to action come from outside or from any particular world. It is Thou, O Lord, who settest all in motion from the depths of the being; it is Thy Will that directs, Thy Force that acts; and no

longer on the limited field of a small individual consciousness, but on the universal field of a consciousness which, in each state of being, is united to all. And the being has at once the conscious perception of all the universal movements in their complexity, and even in their confusion, and the silent and perfect peace of Thy sovereign immutability."

Human life will turn into an epic of creative ecstasy when, cradled on the bosom of the Divine and rocked by His Love alone, it becomes a luminous channel for the outpouring of His Grace and glory upon earth.

RISHABHCHAND

The earth seems to be passing through a decisive crisis: it seems that the great, the formidable play between the material resistance and the spiritual powers is nearing a conclusion, or, in in any case, an element of capital importance has made or is about to make its appearance in the play. . . .

This sorrowful world kneels before Thee, O Lord, in mute supplication; this tortured Matter nestles at Thy feet, its last, its sole refuge; and so imploring Thee, it adores Thee, Thee whom it neither knows nor understands! Its prayer rises like the cry of one in a last agony; that which is disappearing feels confusedly the possibility of living again in Thee; the earth awaits Thy decree in a grandiose prostration. Listen, listen; its voice implores and supplicates Thee. . . .

Death has passed, vast and solemn . . . . A superhuman beauty has appeared on the earth.

Something more marvellous than the most marvellous bliss has made felt the impress of its Presence. . . .

(*Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*)

SRI AUROBINDO AND HUMAN PERSONALITY

IN paying our respectful tribute to one of the most illustrious sons of India on the completion of the seventy-seventh year of his earthly life, it would be useful to throw into prominence some of the most vital points of his message to the world at an admittedly crucial stage of its evolution when humanity, under the deadly influence of the forces of darkness and destruction, is apparently heading towards the brink of a precipice. There is none who is not familiar with the contribution Sri Aurobindo has made towards the political emancipation of India and of the important part he played at the initial stages of the country's mighty struggle for attaining independence; and it is a significant fact that his dream should have been realized exactly seventy-five years after his birthday. But his contribution to India's political freedom is far overshadowed by what he has done towards the cultural emancipation of India. Political freedom, though a necessary prerequisite to the fullest development of a nation's life, is not an end in itself; it is after all a sort of external acquisition which, like all such outer assets, is a mere spring-board providing an impetus to the effective working out of the national destiny.

Sri Aurobindo has himself put the contrast in his inimitable language:—

"Even if all our actions are scrupulously regulated by education or law or social or political machinery, what will be achieved is a regulated pattern of minds, a fabricated pattern of lives, a cultivated pattern of conduct; but a conformity of this kind cannot change, cannot re-create the man within, it cannot carve or cut out a perfect soul or a perfect thinking man or a perfect or growing living being. For soul and mind and life are powers of being and can grow but cannot be cut out or made; an outer process or formation can assist or can express soul and mind and life but cannot create or develop it. One can indeed help the being to grow, not by an attempt at manufacture, but throwing on it stimulating influences or by lending to it one's forces of soul or mind or life; but even so the growth must still come from within it, determining from there what shall be made of these influences and forces, and not from outside. This is the first truth that our creative zeal and aspiration have to learn, otherwise all our human endeavour is foredoomed to turn in a futile circle and can end only in a success that is a specious failure."[1]

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, last chapter.

Here we find within a brief space the essentials of the practical bearing of Sri Aurobindo's world-view which evidently is almost diametrically opposed to a different and pre-eminently modern philosophical outlook. Our greatest need at the present moment, according to him, is to re-create the man within and assist his growth by throwing upon it stimulating influences so that all that is involved in his nature may find complete expression. Our well-intentioned schemes for a great and happy India, when based upon merely external and utilitarian considerations not calculated to bring out the internal potentiality of human nature, might act as temporary palliatives, but can never root out the cause of the disease and lead to a happy and delightful life. The most that may be expected of such efforts is what Sri Aurobindo calls a constructed order or an artificial constructed unity arising out of community of interests, a common civilization and culture, and such other practical accommodations and compromises as might be enforced by the necessity of living together. But in the absence of opportunities for eliciting the universal divine principle in man they are bound to promote conflicts and discords between man and man and between community and community instead of unity, mutuality and harmony.

The difficulty is that we have a natural tendency to restrict the frontiers of Reality within what is directly perceived, what is seen and touched, heard and felt; and Science has conferred upon it the right to be accepted as a universal method of enquiry. The result is that whatever eludes the grasp of the empirical method brings upon itself the condemnation of arbitrary fanciful speculations or erratic figments of uncontrolled imagination. In such a campaign spirit and spiritual values must top the list of casualties. There is then nothing unnatural in the modern tendency to replace consciousness, spiritual reality, or spiritual values by physiological response, nervous system, or economic values. Wedded to the empirical method of analysing human personality, the modern man is busy reorganising our social, economic and political institutions on the assumption that man is only the paragon of animals and, as such, his fullest self-realization lies in the direction of satisfying his animal needs alone.

It requires only a moment's reflection to see that this modern tendency with its deification of the experimental method is in direct opposition to another tradition built upon a different analysis of human personality. According to it man, far from being a bundle of animal instincts or biological dispositions, has implicit in his very nature something that goads him to violate the rules of physical and biological welfare and seek his complete satisfaction in a state of things that would often demand the sacrifice, if not total extirpation of the most imperious calls of his animal

nature. Yet that something defies all the recognised canons of empirical enquiry. It is this latter tradition which has been a characteristically Indian tradition from the earliest days of her national solidarity, and has moulded and guided her nation-building activities. It is needless to say that Sri Aurobindo is one of the most recent and original exponents of this Indian world-view. Human nature, he observes, in one of the most inspiring passages of his work, has a double aspect and a correspondingly double demand is made upon it. On one side, there is the call of our spiritual being which is our true self not created by the world, and on the other side there is the demand of the world around us. The world which is material and imperfect along with our surface being is no doubt created by energies, by physical birth, by environment, yet we are vaguely aware of something that is there in us, something other than what has been thus made, a spirit self-existent, self-determining, pushing the nature towards the creation of an image of its own occult perfection or idea of perfection. There is something, he continues, that grows in us in answer to this demand, that strives to become the image of a divine Somewhat and is impelled to remake the world outside in the image of its own spiritual and mental and vital growth.

If our knowledge of this divine creative principle in us is vague and flickering, the reason is to be found in the fact that Mind, Life and Matter are the realised powers of the evolution and, therefore, well-known to us; whereas Supermind and Sachchidananda are the principles still to be realised in the forms of the manifestation, "and we know them only by hints and a partial and fragmentary action still not disengaged from the lower movement and therefore not easily recognisable". The clearest hint is given by our awareness of our own existence where the nature of experience as knowledge by identity becomes apparent. What is needed is to extend our faculty of mental self-awareness to awareness of the universal Self.

This is not the occasion for pursuing further the profounder aspects of Sri Aurobindo's analysis of experience and of human personality. His theories of integral experience and integral reality, mental awareness and supramental consciousness or supramental gnosis, along with several other highly original doctrines at the back of his message are as much marked by a rare profundity of insight as by a comprehensive grasp of the different sides of human life and activity. They, in spite of their Vedic and Upanishadic moorings, have been developed in close contact with the modern intellectual environment; and in this respect Sri Aurobindo may be fitly called the cultural crusader of India.[1]

A. C. MUKHERJI

[1] Summarised from an address delivered at Allahabad on the 15th August 1949.

THE POSITIVE APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY *

IV

ALTHOUGH we have seen that Spirit is essentially the significant reality secreted in Matter, and that Matter is the basic mould in which Spirit can eventually become manifest in the world, we have yet to discern the precise oneness of these extreme entities which persistently appear to be eternal dualities. For it is only on an entirely reconciling unity that a true integral harmony can ultimately rest. In the first place, certain experiences indicate that the duality itself is fundamentally a relative one belonging to our ordinary awareness of things, and therefore the limitation would originally arise from an inherent dividing action in man himself,—for mind alone and unillumined by a greater Consciousness is largely an agent of separation rather than one of integration. It is for this latter reason that the integral truth and knowledge which modern man is seeking outwardly, must eventually find its real basis in a wider and inward awareness. Such awareness, as we have already seen, is implicit in the attainment of cosmic consciousness, where all extremes are experienced not as eternal antagonists but as essentially the converse and complementary facets of a single Reality. It is an integrative seeing, that springs from an all-embracing knowing and is achieved through an intimate identity, wherein the subject and the object—the knower and the known—have become one. This means the attainment of both an intuitive feeling into the diversity of cosmos even to its innermost depths and centre, and at the same time an integral encompassing of the wholeness of it. It is by this comprehensive insight that we become aware of Spirit, not only as the hidden essence or soul of Matter, but also as the invisibly silk-like thread which runs through all the multifarious forms of the universe, and which makes of Cosmos an effective unity. But above all we can begin to realise the transcendent truth of Spirit, or soul-stuff, as being the true Self of that supreme Conscious Being, whose Nature has entered into and become the material universe with its successive gradations of Life, Mind and an ever-pressing Beyond. Matter is thus integrally and eternally joined to Spirit in the Existence of the One, who is the All and the Supreme. Through this we are able to see that the terrestrial evolution is no blind instinctive movement, but has emerged throughout as a purposive and consciously guided

* Based on *The Life Divine.*

one, having for its highest aim a divinised life on earth. And man, the self-conscious being, has become the central pivot and potential growing-point of this world-transforming movement.

Having encircled the Cosmic truth of the One who manifests through the Many, we can more readily realise that the vast infinite Stillness of the Transcendent Consciousness beyond all manifestation does not negate the activity of the Cosmos, nor does that Silence constitute the whole of the Transcendence. Rather is the Silence the Ground of a Supreme Reality of which the Transcendence and the Cosmos are the two complementary aspects or poles—negative and positive—which constitute Its essential Oneness. In other words, Cosmos is the manifest Dynamism of that Supreme, and the Transcendence the passive support and infinite source of its eternal creativity, the fount even of all that inexhaustible energy. But ultimately man himself comes to realise that the Supreme Reality and the true inner self of his being are one; that the soul is the very seed of the Divine, and the All-Supreme is in fact the Self. Thus it follows that the Cosmic largeness and the Transcendent Calm can be realised inwardly through his own central being, not merely as a projection of the ottal Reality, but as the integral essence of It.

Just as the infinite Calm is the Divine ground or support of the Cosmic activity, so for man's perfection in the world the attainment within himself of that unshakable Stillness is the real basis of an integral development. For it is only by immediate contact and hold upon that vast infinite Quietude that the firm stability and foundation can be laid for the individual to embrace the largeness of the Cosmic Reality without being swept away by the infinite multiplicity of it. In this way a greater Perfection will be attained which can be a more permanent and normal possession of man's being. Of this attainment we have the outstanding example of Buddha; for after his achievement of a world-transcending Calm he performed all his enlightened and noble works in the world, becoming thereby the silent sentinel and active embodiment of those transcendent Heights. We see that it was rather through his own luminous example than by any verbal teaching that Buddha had demonstrated the truth of a worldly action issuing from an inner impersonal calm. It was really the surface appearance of that utter peacefulness which had led men to conclude that the withdrawal from activity is itself the ultimate and absolute summit of attainment. By the same signs also the condition of non-Being, which the pure Spirit as the antithesis of cosmic Being thus appears to present, was taken to be the goal of human endeavour. But venturing beyond that Silence, which itself stills the very thought and speech in us, we come to the direct Truth that this apparent finality of Nothingness is but the inability of our finite thought to translate through words that which

is beyond all mental concepts. The very postulation in fact of a non-Being (since non-Being is but a term representing our own limitation of expression) implies that Something really does exist beyond conceptual thought, and that there only appears to be a blank or a zero because the infinity of the Beyond thus escapes the grasp of the translating mind. A larger comprehension indeed reveals that, whereas Being is the body of cosmic existence as well as the action of the Supreme, the term non-Being represents the Supreme's eternal freedom from all cosmic manifestation and movement. Through this we see that the one status does not deny, but rather emphasises and completes, the reality of the other. And we realise at last that the face of the Transcendence is really the gateway to that further and more integral divine attainment which it is humanity's work to bring to fruition.

While it is widely assumed that a comprehensive knowledge of the universe can be obtained merely through the scrutiny of external signs and indications, at the same time it is admitted by modern science that such means will only give relative viewpoints of the world, and thus the Absolute would be made wholly unattainable. But there are other ways of knowing which are not being seriously considered in modern thought. Thus man's knowledge, in its origin, really issues from the progressive opening and widening of the individual self, by which he can ultimately attain to a realisation of the true Self of the universe. This discovery, as the ancients had directly seen, is the very key which opens up the infinite vistas of a higher Knowledge; and is in fact the basis and mainspring of man's all further knowing. By this inner unfolding we become aware in a direct and living way, not only of cosmic existence, but also of a state in which all relative phenomena disappear in a self-extinction or Nirvana, wherein the limited self is lost in the Self of the Infinite. It was this experience, however, of total immersion in the Impersonal beyond all egoistic attachment, which in becoming a single aim and endeavour had powerfully drawn the aspiring soul from its hold on worldly life. And therefore we must now regard this solitary pursuit as an escape of the soul from its own true destiny on earth, rather than as a state of fulfilment. For even while maintaining this high impersonal detachment, it is necessary at the same time to retain the full conscious grasp on the activity and rhythm of the world movement. Thus even in the transcendent consciousness the individual need not lose the dynamic and positive truth of Existence,—of a divine Becoming in and through the activity of the worlds. And that creation which the Divine has thus embraced, can man with all conscience reject?

As in the Cosmic Consciousness, so in the Transcendent we come to see that whereas Matter and the physical universe constitute the basis of the

Manifestation, pure Spirit which at first appears to obliterate all material reality is in fact the detached centre of cosmic action, from which the action itself is guided and sustained. From this standpoint we see that the ultimate Beyond is no blank negation or infinite zero, but is indeed a supreme Wisdom and Intelligence, the Lord of all the universal activity, whose very Spirit has entered into and permeates the multiplicity of Creation even to the minutest particle-centre of it—whether of atom, cell or soul. And even one's own petty action can be seen to be ultimately the sanction or tolerance of a Supreme Will, and not merely the direct result of any personal or collective effort. The Supreme (or Brahman of the ancients) is the eternal guiding Power, the ever-present and all-pervading Reality.

All things are, in their secret essence, the Self-nature of that One Supreme. It is only when the habitually dividing action of mind disappears that we realise that the apparent division of real and unreal, and the incompatibility of Matter and Spirit, are but illusions of a partial seeing of That which is really a comprehensive Truth and all-embracing Harmony. Even the forces of darkness—evil, pain, suffering and ignorance which are inevitably interwoven in our earthly life—are not really antagonists of the Supreme, but amidst the clash of life they are the as-yet unconquered antagonists of man in his path towards the Divine. One Lord, one Self there is amid all the diversity of worlds; one Supreme Who is above, around and within,—and the Many are but His multiple representations and infinite becomings. It is with this conception of an omniscient and all-embracing Divine Reality that we can begin to formulate an integral and positive structure of the universe,—one which will reveal not only man's relation with the Cosmos but his intimate connection also with that vaster Beyond.

It has consistently been revealed as our highest and deepest experience of the Supreme Reality—by those who have passed beyond the limited mental outlook—that It is ever an eternal triple compound of Being, Consciousness-with-Force, and Bliss. And whether in the concentrated essence of the individual, or in the infinite extension of the Cosmos, or in the unseizable vastness of the Transcendence, always there is that ever-present Being or Existence, of infinite Wisdom and Power, and of inexpressible Love or Beatitude. Only when we can rise above and become truly detached from the divided consciousness of ego, do we realise that the Transcendence and the Cosmos, the apparent non-Being and the universal Being, the Silence and the Activity, the One and the Many are really the multiple facets of that Supreme All, Who is eternally and throughout the One omnipresent Reality.

N. PEARSON

ULTIMATE REALITY AND HUMAN CONCEPT

(A Letter)

YOU will agree that all philosophical thinking strives to bridge the gulf between what is given in sense-perception and is, therefore, felt and known as true and what is not thus given but is yet known and felt as almost equally, sometimes even more true. This dualism has been named as Appearance and Reality, as Mind and Matter; with Sri Aurobindo, it is Spirit and Matter. An effective reconciliation of this dualism is all the business of philosophy and the measure of its achievement determines the degree of the success of a philosophical system.

The concept of the degrees of reality is the natural device for this reconciliation in most of the monistic systems. But the real difficulty is the detailed working out of it, so that the two extreme poles virtually become continuous and one through a system of understandable intermediate links. It is to these links that Sri Aurobindo devotes an exceptional degree of attention and they constitute, I would say, the relatively more important part of his system. Undoubtedly this part of his philosophy makes rather an unusual reading, because generally we are content to state the dualism and then enunciate the general principles of its reconciliation without undertaking to show the detailed steps of transition from the one to the other. However, in Sri Aurobindo an appreciation of these steps is indispensable, as without it we can never assess the measure of the reconciliation of the philosophical dualism achieved by him.

Further, this logical structure of Sri Aurobindo's system has a continuous experiential basis. He takes the whole range of experience, from the most primitive sense-perception to the highest spiritual experience as essential to a philosophical representation of the world and existence. The various steps and stages or poises of being, as they are also called, are therefore no mere logical necessities of the resolution of the philosophical dualism, but factual levels of experience too. This constitutes again a characteristic feature of Sri Aurobindo's thought and lends to it a basis of experience as also a test of verifiability.

Having thus stated two general distinguishing features of Sri Aurobindo's thought, it becomes now easier to come to the particular propositions affirmed by you.

You are right when you say that Sri Aurobindo interprets the "Void", "Nothing", "Emptiness" etc. of the mystics as implying "that no empirical concepts of the human mind (can) describe and define (Ultimate Reality,)" which is "only in this way negative but really positive." This, in fact, means that non-being too is a poise of being and that when the mystics talk of Reality as "Void" etc. they are describing this particular poise of being.

It will be helpful here to state briefly Sri Aurobindo's conception of the ultimate Reality. The Reality that is really ultimate is to him an absolute Absolute. Sachchidananda, which is the Supreme Consciousness determining and guiding the universe is virtually the equivalent of our common idealistic conception of ultimate Reality and the Absolute, but to Sri Aurobindo it is no more than "the highest positive expression of Reality to our consciousness". And in our ascent to the true ultimate Reality this does admit of an antithetical non-being, the *Asat*, and it is only through and beyond this antithesis of being and non-being that we contemplate the absolute Absolute. This antithetical non-being is surely no pure negation, but perhaps a contrary and complementary poise of being and, therefore, positive in character.

Hence the "Void" of the mystics is a "Zero, which is All or an indefinable Infinite which appears to the mind blank, because mind grasps only finite constructions." (The Life Divine, Vol. I, ch. Reality Omnipresent, p. 43).

From the position that this "Void is negative only in the sense that it is indescribable in empirical concepts, but is, in fact, positive in character", you have drawn two consequences to which we must now turn.

Your conclusions are, (1) That Ultimate Reality is ungraspable by human concepts though a greater mind through other concepts may be able to do so, (2) that no "logical intellect", however great, could grasp it. That it can only be experienced in "mystic intuition".

You are right in rejecting the former as unintended by Sri Aurobindo. Surely no concepts, representing as they do abstracted common elements from amongst particular objects, which too in their turn have been separated from the totality of reality under necessity of the active and cognitive nature of man, can be adequate to grasp Reality. You have surely read in 'The Life Divine' that "Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer". (Vol. I, ch. Mind and Supermind. p. 247). And then "It is this essential characteristic of Mind which conditions the workings of all its operative powers, whether conception, perception, sensation or the dealings of creative thought." (ibid. p. 247). But surely concepts, as representative elements of knowledge admitting of widest generalities can be used to represent, indicate and suggest the nature and character of

Reality and that is how Philosophy becomes possible. However, it is obvious, in fact the nature and the character of conceptual knowledge itself seems to suggest, that there must be a Consciousness, which can take Reality as a whole, in the fullness of its details and uniqueness. And for man too, if his present conceptual mind is the result of a long evolution, which does not appear to have come to an end, then evidently other possibilities of cognition cannot be foreclosed. Hence the conceptual process may really tend to develop into a cognition, which is, more and more, able to grasp the original wholeness of the objects as it exists in fact. Religious and mystic experience bears some positive evidence of the nature of this process and so far as Yoga is concerned it is cultivable by an intensive discipline of consciousness and is, therefore, verifiable.

In your latter conclusion you have shown by a *reductio ad absurdum* that intuitive knowledge is an impossibility. In this connection I would recall to you what your great psychologist and philosopher, William James, called the Psychologist Fallacy, i.e. the confusion arising out of a failure to distinguish between the standpoint of experience and that of exposition. Of course when we talk and write of mystic and spiritual experiences we 'conceptualise' them, but that does not mean that non-conceptual mode of cognition as experience is impossible. Surely the same mystic may recognise two of his states as 'similar' or even 'the same', but he will also admit that that description is determined by a particular purpose, either of comparison for himself or communication to another, as in a more disinterested way he will affirm that each experience, as a whole, is completely unique. Besides, we are also familiar in perception with a non-conceptual mode of cognition, whose validity is basic and unquestionable. The perception of animals, where conceptualisation has not intermixed in the process as in man, we have knowledge of things, we have recognition of things and all this without the play of concepts. A supraconceptual knowledge of things can thus be no inconceivable possibility and, therefore, no contradictions can be said to be inherent in "mystic intuition".

Here I might also say that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and his intuition and other higher modes of cognition may be called mystical only in the sense that we are accustomed to call everything supra-intellectual as mystical, otherwise he aims at and gives a clear and rational account of the ranges of being and knowledge above and beyond the present human phase of cosmic evolution.

INDRA SEN

SRI AUROBINDO AND PHYSICAL CULTURE*

WHEN the committee of this conference asked me to inaugurate this conference I hesitated for some time, because men like me who have found a spritual home at Pondicherry do not want to leave the Ashram easily where ample work awaits each one of its 800 inmates. I believe the committee chose me for this task in order to express its partiality for the little service I was able to render to the cause of physical culture in Gujarat in the past. As I go back in my mind to those happy years which I spent in the movement, I find that they were more than amply rewarded by the joy in the work and by the ennobling company of pure young boys and girls. Let me also remind you that there were others who did their work in the same field.

But I accepted the task on two important considerations:—

(i) That it would enable me to acknowledge publicly—what was not made public up till now—that so far as our movement was concerned it owed its origin to the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo who was then one of the foremost leaders of nationalist India in the difficult days of partition of Bengal. His visit to Baroda after the Surat Congress of 1907 was the occasion for the beginning of the movement. The primary motive was to prepare young men of strong physique, keen intellect and sound character for the cause of the country. We were fortunate in our endeavours, for whenever there were opportunities our young men took part in all public activities for service without directly involving the whole movement in politics. It was not that we were afraid of politics but in the beginning we had an idea of bringing about a revolution in the country. I need not go into the details of the movement as it is now a part of history. My main idea is to make it clear that the inspiration came from Sri Aurobindo.

I would request you here to understand the full implication of the word "Movement". Gymnasium in Gujarat, as we worked in it and looked upon it, was not merely an institution, it was a movement—a movement started by young men to prepare themselves physically, intellectually, morally and, if possible, spiritually, to serve India. This will partly explain lack of attempt on our part to stress various items of physical culture pure and simple. By God's grace, the movement among young men was carried on with vigour

* Inaugural address delivered at the *Second Bombay Provincial Physical Education Conference* on the 24th of April, 1950 at Ahmedabad.

and sincerity, and I am glad to find today that the movement has become a recognised part of the programme of national reconstruction and been accepted by our national Government.

(ii) Another reason for accepting the task was to remove the current impression that Sri Aurobindo's vision of perfection is something other-worldly and has no contact with life. Let me quote his own authentic words in this connection; "A Divine life in the world or an institution having that for its aim and purpose cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from life of ordinary men in the world, or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in life and not a work outside or separate from it." And then he gives a parallel from the past. "The life of the ancient Rishis in their Ashrams had such a connection; they were creators, guides of men, and the life of the Indian people in ancient time was largely developed and directed by their shaping influence."[1] It may be that there is difference between the ideals and methods of life and activities in such an institution and those current in ordinary life. But, says Sri Aurobindo, "It must have contacts and connections with it." I am glad to be the link for establishing such a contact.

It is now generally accepted that physical culture can have a direct bearing on mental and moral building up of a nation. It is this that Sri Aurobindo first points out :—

"I would like to dwell upon the need and utility for the nation of a wide-spread organisation of sports or physical exercises as are practised in the Ashram. In their more superficial aspect they appear merely as games and amusements which people take up for entertainment or as a field for the outlet of the body's energy and natural instinct of activity or for a means of the development and maintenance of the health and strength of the body; but they are or can be much more than that: they are also fields for the development of habits, capacities and qualities which are greatly needed and of the utmost service to a people in war or in peace, and in its political and social activities, in most indeed of the provinces of a combined human endeavour. It is to this which we may call the national aspect of the subject that I would wish to give especial prominence.

"In our own time these sports, games and athletics have assumed a place and command a general interest such as was seen only in earlier times in countries like Greece, Greece where all sides of human activity were equally

[1] Bulletin of Physical Education, Vol. I, No. I.

developed and the gymnasium, chariot-racing and other sports and athletics had the same importance on the physical side as on the mental side the Arts and poetry and the drama, and were especially stimulated and attended to by the civic authorities of the City State. It was Greece that made an institution of the Olympiad and the recent re-establishment of the Olympiad as an international institution is a significant sign of the revival of the ancient spirit. This kind of interest has spread to a certain extent to our own country and India has begun to take a place in international contests such as the Olympiad. The newly founded State in liberated India is also beginning to be interested in developing all sides of the life of the nation and is likely to take an active part and a habit of direction in fields which were formerly left to private initiative. It is taking up, for instance, the question of the foundation and preservation of health and physical fitness in the nation and in the spreading of a general recognition of its importance. It is in this connection that the encouragement of sports and associations for athletics and all activities of this kind would be an incalculable assistance. A generalisation of the habit of taking part in such exercises in childhood and youth and early manhood would help greatly towards the creation of physically fit and energetic people.

"But of a higher import than the foundation, however necessary, of health, strength and fitness of the body is the development of discipline and morale and sound strong character towards which these activities can help. There are many sports which are of the utmost value towards this end, because they help to form and even necessitate the qualities of courage, hardihood, energetic action and initiative or call for skill, steadiness of will or rapid decision and action, the perception of what is to be done in an emergency and dexterity in doing it. One development of the utmost value is the awakening of the essential and instinctive body-consciousness which can see and do what is necessary without an indication from mental thought and which is equivalent in the body to swift insight in the mind and spontaneous and rapid decision in the will. One may add the formation of a capacity for harmonious and right movements of the body, especially in a combined action, economic of physical effort and discouraging waste of energy, which result from such exercises as marches or drill and which displace the loose and straggling, the inharmonious or disorderly or wasteful movements common to the untrained individual body. Another invaluable result of these activities is the growth of what has been called the sporting spirit. That includes good humour and tolerance and consideration for all, a right attitude and friendliness to competitors and rivals, self-control and scrupulous observance of the laws of the games, fair play and avoidance

of the use of foul means, an equal acceptance of victory or defeat without bad humour, resentment or ill-will towards successful competitors, loyal acceptance of the decisions of the appointed judge, umpire or referee. These qualities have their value for life in general and not only for sport, but the help that sport can give to their development is direct and invaluable. If they could be made more common not only in the life of the individual but in the national life and in the international where at the present day the opposite tendencies have become too rampant, existence in this troubled world of ours would be smoother and might open to a greater chance of concord and amity of which it stands very much in need. More important still is the custom of discipline, obedience, order, habit of team-work, which certain games necessitate. For, without them success is uncertain or impossible. Innumerable are the activities in life, especially in national life, in which leadership and obedience to leadership in combined action are necessary for success, victory in combat or fulfilment of a purpose. The role of the leader, the captain, the power and skill of his leadership, his ability to command, the confidence and ready obedience of his followers is of the utmost importance in all kinds of combined action or enterprise; but few can develop these things without having learnt themselves to obey and to act as one mind or as one body with others. This strictness of training, this habit of discipline and obedience is not inconsistent with individual freedom; it is often the necessary condition for its right use, just as order is not inconsistent with liberty but rather the condition for the right use of liberty and even for its preservation and survival. In all kinds of concerted action this rule is indispensable: orchestration becomes necessary and there could be no success for an orchestra in which individual musicians played according to their own fancy and refused to follow the indications of the conductor."[1]

It is a matter of great satisfaction that India has been organising the Olympic games as a part of the world Olympic organisation. We have to make up a great deal for our past inactivity, we have to make great efforts to keep pace with other countries of the world like America. The challenge to our youth stands in the open door of the world Olympiad. In the last Olympiad at London our country scored only 7 points! We are almost at the bottom of the scale among 59 nations. U.S.A., the champion nation, scored 547. That is not all; we are inferior even to small countries like Hungary and Czechoslovakia! And this in spite of, or—shall I say because of—our

[1] Bulletin of Physical Education, Vol. I, No. I.

retaining the world title in Hockey! Our standards are very low, and our stamina is also low. We lack the constant application and the training. Due to poverty our deserving competitors perhaps do not get proper nutrition. All this requires to be set right.

In the Ashram at Pondichery, physical culture finds a very important place. It is there a part not merely of educational programme but a part of spiritual discipline. It may be questioned what has an Ashram devoted to spiritual culture to do with physical culture. This brings us to the whole question of the place of the physical consciousness and the body in any scheme of perfection.

Man's attitude towards the body has been often contradictory. Body has been regarded at times as an obstacle to the soul,—at other times as an opportunity. In the past, religions and spirituality have encouraged even in the common man the idea that the body is "an obstacle, it is something to be overcome and discarded." It has not been looked upon as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field for the conquest of the Spirit. The body is so condemned because it is made of gross Matter, it is an impediment to the Spirit, and also because it imposes limitations which appear unchangeable. It brings down the Spirit to the gross needs of the body such as hunger and thirst, it limits the intensities of feeling, passion and will by its incapacity, and imposes severe limitations by its subjection to fatigue, disease and disintegration called death. It seems to follow the unchangeable law of birth, growth, decay and disintegration.

But this negative attitude of looking down upon the body requires to be radically changed. For, we see that all success in human endeavour requires the co-operation of Spirit and Matter,—of soul and body. Therefore Body is not merely an inert formation, it is a living instrument of the Spirit,—it is an opportunity for manifesting the powers of the Spirit. Body is not in reality inert, it is not inconscient. It is capable of more refined vibrations than those that are usual to it. There is no experience, however subtle, psychological or spiritual, that does not translate itself into, or has no reaction in, the vibrations of the body. As it participates in the primary needs of hunger and thirst, and answers the primitive animal instincts in our nature, it equally participates in the intensities of passions and emotions and nobility of ideas and ideals. It is true that this participation is neither complete nor even adequate. But this fact indicates that the possibilities of the body are not confined to mechanical functions. As our efforts to study the constitution of Matter have revealed to us an infinite reservoir of material energy and laid it open to man, so the probing into the possibilities of the physical consciousness of the body is bound to reveal untold

sources and powers of living Matter. We can neglect this important instrument at our own peril.

Therefore the perfection of the body—as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal—must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. And if we are seeking for a total perfection of our being, we cannot leave aside its physical part; for the body is the material basis we have to use. "*Shariram adyam khalu dharma sadhanam*—the body is, indeed, the first instrument for the fulfilment of Dharma." Dharma means here every ideal we can propose to ourselves. In the ideal of tota[1] perfection of our being, in which we seek to fulfil the life of the Spirit on the earth,—in the conditions of this material universe—the body cannot be left out. It must also undergo a transformation and the actions and functions of the body must attain to a supreme capacity and function which is possible to it—but which it has not yet attained.

An ideal spiritual life in a material world like ours simplies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence—Spirit and Matter. The soul of man has its basis of life established here in Matter. From that base he rises to the summits of the Spirit but it does not, nor is it necessary, to cast away its base. It joins the heights and the depths together. "The Spirit descends into Matter with all its lights and glories and powers and it fills and transforms life in the material world making it more and more divine. In the process of this transformation the body must reach a perfection which we can hardly conceive at present."[1]

Thus it will be seen that the two kinds of perfection are possible to the body: the ordinary one attainable by physical, vital and mental methods; the other a spiritual perfection attainable by bringing into play the power of the Spirit direct upon the body. Man has from the dawn of history tried all the ordinary methods more or less. All the methods of physical culture, breath control, the control exercised by the mind over the body can be used for attaining this perfection. Even this reveals many powers beyond the normal possibilities of the body. Mental will acting upon the body produces wonderful results. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "What can be attained within the human boundaries can be something considerable and sometimes immense." Heart-beats have been controlled by will, diseases have been cured by suggestion and faith. Even what the mind and will can do with the body in the field proper to the body and its life in the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kinds, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what

[1] Bulletin of Physical Education, Vol. I, No. II.

seems possible, courage and refusal to succumb under endless and murderous physical suffering and other victories of many kinds, sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous, are seen in human life and they must not be regarded as something unnatural and abnormal, but must be reckoned as part of our concept of total perfection. The body has often given unflinching and persistent response to whatever call is made upon it in the most difficult and discouraging circumstances, e.g. by the necessities of war, and travel and adventure. The endurance of the body can reach astounding proportions and the seemingly inert body can return a surprising response.

Health and strength are the first conditions for the natural perfection of the body. This would include not only muscular strength, strength of limbs, and physical stamina but also fineness, alertness and adaptability of the body and its nervous parts. Over and above these powers the body can acquire dexterity, swiftness, skill in various activities. This fitness is now possessed by a few. But it could be generalised by an extended and many-sided physical education and discipline. It can be done partly by popularising sports, as also by spreading opportunities for physical exercises. It can also be done in part by training groups for common action, combined movements, which would bring in discipline also. There are activities in which a developed individual will, skill of mind, quick perception, forceful action become necessary. All these must be included in our conception of the natural powers of the body and its capacity.

If physical perfection is to be achieved, the active and awakened powers of the body, should be developed and other powers, latent and asleep, must be awakened and their effectivity increased. There is, in all the activities of the body, a kind of automatism which seems mechanical, carrying on the work on the physical plane without any intervention of the mind. Digestion, circulation of blood, readjustment of the eyes, and various other actions belong to this category. There are other movements to which the body can be trained and then those movements can become automatic. Thus a trained automatism is also possible to the body. This trained automatism is sometimes a perfect skill and capacity of the eye and ear or of the hands or other members.

If the very highest perfection of the body is to be attained, we have to turn to the Spirit. There must be an increasing hold from the inner consciousness or the higher consciousness over the body and its powers.

Let us, therefore, give the body the importance it deserves in our life—individual, national, and international. Let us give it an important place in scheme of education and collective living. And still more let us try to open

it to the consciousness of the Spirit, so that we may be able to fulfil the great vision, "*Isha vasyamidam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat*[1] —All this, including the body, is a fit habitation for the Lord, whatever is moving in the universal movement." This attempt to express the Divine in life is the main burden of Indian culture throughout the ages. In that total expression of the Divine in life, let the body find its place and its divinely intended perfection. Let the body be made capable of holding the light of the Spirit, capable of carrying the delight of the Spirit,—"The joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy."[2]

From this distant possibility of physical perfection on which fundamental considerations had to be accepted in their bare outline, let me turn to the young men assembled here and address them a few words. I feel I can do it best by conveying to them the idea of what is "youth", as defined by the Mother in the Ashram, and what is expected of it:—

"Youth does not depend on the fewness of years one has lived, but on the capacity to grow and to progress. To grow—that is to increase one's potentialities, one's capacities; to progress—that is to perfect without halting the capacities that one already possesses. Old age does not come with a great number of years, but with the incapacity or the refusal to continue to grow and to progress. I have known old people of 20 years of age and young ones of 70. As soon as one wishes to settle down in life and to rest on the benefits of past efforts, as soon as one thinks that one has done what one had to do and has accomplished what one had to accomplish—in short—as soon as one ceases to progress, to advance along the road to perfection, one is sure to fall back—to grow old.

For the body also, one can learn that there is, so to say, no limit to its growth in capacities and to its progress, provided one discovers the true method and the proper conditions. This is one of the numerous experiments which we wish to attempt in order to break the collective suggestion and to show to the world that human possibilities surpass all expectations."[3]

A. B. PURANI

[1] Isha Upanishad.
[2] Bulletin of Physical Education, Vol. I, No. II.
[3] ibid.

POETRY AND HEALING

APOLLO was worshipped not only as the God of poetry but also of healing. And indeed that is easy to understand. For what is the function of poets? A modern poet has written:—

> They discern to intensify
> Things that touch them in passing by;
> Breathe to see
> In the moving daily face
> Its finality.
> Faces are forged far away;
> Yes, but in that powerful place
> Is the poet's permanency
> And from out it goes a string
> Feeding perfectibility
> Into each and everything
> Tentatively shaped and growing.
> This the poet sees, to say.
> Easily the halfway
> Shape forgets what it is doing,
> Who began it, where it's going;
> And the trembling and dark pattern
> Of its absolute perfection
> Misses miserably...

Keats, when he was a medical student, thought that a poet—

> "...passes forth into the charmed air
> With talisman to call up spirits rare
> From plant, cave, rock and fountain.—To his sight
> The hush of natural objects opens quite
> To the core: and every secret essence there
> Reveals the elements of good and fair..."

Once he has penetrated by poetical seeing "to the core", even the air, you observe, is "charmed"—is given, may one suppose this to mean? that "encouragement of being" which discernment of, and delight in, a creature?

very truth and unique inmost quality by a dedicated servant of the absolute Beauty and Truth must give. And what is the doctor's true function but the use of an identical power? The seer-poet observes in the existing shape of whatever confronts him, not only what is superficially to be seen and admired in it now, but the visionary form of its perfected possibility. Feeling this worship of affirmation, the young hound springs gratefully to fondle his hand, the sick hen lies close to him so that this emanated idea of its wholeness —this filling of all its boundaries with that which it essentially is—may gradually push away all that threatens perfection. Obscure responses to such a recognition of quality may be sensed coming from many of the so-called "inanimate" things. But what is "inanimate"? "When our eyes that are now blinded by the idea of Matter, open to the supreme Light, we shall find that nothing is inanimate, but all contains, expressed or unexpressed, involved or evolved, secret or manifest or in course of manifestation, not only that state of involved consciousness which we call *annam* or Matter, but also life, mind, knowledge, bliss, divine force and being,—*prāna, manas, vijñāna, ānanda, chit, sat.*"[1]

Empty of thought, alone,
In a field or a still room,
I have known the field fill,
In the room a communion:
And the plants, as it were, kneel,
And its wood leap in the room
To a comforter's Word, to a lover's: to whom?
He is piercing my skin as I feel the wood leap to His Will.

Medicine, working from a material base only, has done very wonderful—and very cruel—things. Would the child of Apollo—the doctor-poet who can see "to the core"—take this old, weary and fading man into hospital, jig up his physical powers with injections and send him out again into a world which is no longer his world, which confuses him, has no time for him and does not want him? Possibly. Such an experience may be necessary for the soul. But without knowledge of what Lazarus returned from the grave is to make of living—only a knowledge of the power of drugs—is it a divine act to raise Lazarus? Where is the compassion with which such a one should be sent to confront such an ordeal: the strengthening transference of any assured knowledge that, this being the divine will, it is a necessity to the manifestation and the person?

[1] Sri Aurobindo: *The Yoga and Its Objects.*

A new age is coming, and very quickly. All the old moulds are now breaking or broken. The divine golden and the red-golden rods are entering even bodies to purify and prepare them, and "this working is often attended with disturbance and trouble in the system."[1] There is no help from material science. Many "disturbances and troubles in the system" nowadays are not diagnosable at all by it: a woman (it has happened lately) feels tired, complains of a headache, goes to bed and is found dead in the morning of no physically discoverable cause. Evidently no son of Apollo was by that woman's bedside seeing the event "to the core"! What, had he been present, is it likely that he would have seen? Something like this, would he not? A divine Idea, playing at being a woman, complained of a headache, went to bed, and—for development's sake—was taken out of that form by its Divine moulder...That is how things are likely to come about increasingly, are they not, in the new age? The divine action, I mean, within the temporary form, will be simply and happily recognised. For, "The whole heart and action of man must be changed, but from within, not from without...by realisation of God in ourselves and the world and a remoulding of life by that realisation...For this purpose the practices of Hatha and Raja Yoga are not sufficient and even the Trimarga will not serve; we must go higher and resort to the Adhyatmayoga. The principle of Adhyatmayoga is, in knowledge, the realisation of all things that we see or do not see but are aware of, —men, things, ourselves, events, gods, titans, angels,—as one divine Brahman, and in action and attitude, an absolute self-surrender to the Paratpara Purusha, the transcendent, infinite and universal Personality who is at once personal and impersonal, finite and infinite, self-limiting and illimitable, one and many, and informs with his being not only the Gods above, but man and the worm and the clod below. The surrender must be complete. Nothing must be reserved, no desire, no demand, no opinion, no idea that this must be, that cannot be, that this should be and that should not be,—all must be given. The heart must be purified of all desire, the intellect of all self-will, every duality must be renounced, the whole world seen and unseen must be recognised as one supreme expression of concealed Wisdom, Power and Bliss, and the entire being given up, as an engine is passive in the hands of the driver, for the divine Love, Might and perfect Intelligence to do its work and fulfil its divine Lila..."[2]

> I see! I am in Your arms. We are whirring through
> Space—and time-ways homely to You,

[1] *The Yoga and Its Objects.*
[2] ibid.

To me, strange...
I lean on Your eagerness.
In the end I shall know—You know it—the need of this—
This—and that other—supreme hideousness
Accepted by You, suffered by me, missed
By all the neat pictures of human-divine tryst
Brain has created. Age and infirmity
You seem to regard as rags hung on a tree
You're about to make wands of...So will I!
Now nobly we sail through experience: "Good" and "Evil"
Equally forgers of a future You know as Delight.
See Venus's pure lamp pull at this little hill
Over a crescent moon, Jupiter to the right!
This dark, boughed hill, the whole time—and space-sized Now
We centre, these three pure beings are together to fill
With the rays of a newness at last holdable.
All feeling but awe, this emphasis felt, stops still,
Kneels, and becomes an awe that is love, that's peace,
And faith quiet as a hill or a holly-bough.

JOYCE CHADWICK

Of those who possess a true value the power of Yoga will increase the value, but from one who has only some false appearance of art, even that appearance will vanish or else lose its appeal.

(Words of THE MOTHER)

REVIEWS

(I)

The Analysis of Political Behaviour: An Empirical Approach. *By Harold D. Lasswell.* International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction. Kegan Paul. 21 s.

The Crisis of Our Age. *By Pitrim A. Sorokin.* Harvard University.

The phenomenal popularity of recent books on Sociology or the study of man in society shows that the extreme peril of human crisis is compelling men as never before to diagnose its causes and seek for a remedy, as the condition of our very survival. A striking note of recent books on Sociology is robust optimism; in spite of world-wide conflicts and the race for immensely destructive weapons, something in man keeps up the faith that humanity and its civilisation will be saved and a new era will dawn upon the earth. The imminent danger is supposed to rise from a conflict of ideologies, Capitalism and Communism: but a deeper view shows that they are not really two ideologies but rather two varieties of the same ideology, which can be called the Western as distinguished from the spiritual ideology of the East, of Asia. The difference is based on the conception of man and his place and destiny on earth. The Western conception is to regard man as being solely made up of body, life and mind and his destiny as being the fulfilment of these on earth. The means of achieving this destiny is supposed to be a suitable organisation of the social, political and economic institutions. The Eastern conception, on the other hand, specially developed in India, is that mind, life and body are not the real man, they are only instruments of the soul which is the real man and which is a portion of the Divine descended on the earth to manifest some of the divine glory under terrestrial conditions. The means appropriate for such a consummation is primarily an inner development which will be expressed through the outer life of man and his social institutions. If the Eastern spiritual conception is universally accepted, then the conflict within the Western conception will be easily solved, as the organisation of the outer life, of social and political institutions will then assume a secondary importance. The two books under review show that the West also has begun definitely to turn towards a subjective conception of life indicating the coming of what Sri Aurobindo has called the subjective age of social development. Professor Laswell affirms the possibility of

changing politics by changing men's hearts, though he does not rely on redemption or revelation, but on psychological method applied to personality and environment. He does not believe in original sin, he has belief in human nature and seems to imply that human wickedness is the effect of social, psychological and economic maladjustment, not its inevitable cause. A key passage in his book appears in his chapter on "Legal Education and Public Policy":

"The laborious work of modern science provided a non-sentimental foundation for the intuitive confidence with which poets and prophets of human brotherhood have regarded mankind. Buttressing aspirations of these sensitive spirits stands the modern arsenal of facts about the benevolent potentialities of human nature, and a secure knowledge of methods by which distorted personality growth can be prevented or cured; without this knowledge, the intuitions of genius are helpless; armed with this knowledge moral intention becomes steadily more capable of fulfilling itself in reality. There is no rational room for pessimism about the possibility of putting morals into practice on the basis of what we know about the development of human personality. Any form of crippling predestinarianism based on myths about "heredity", either of an individual or a race, can be brushed aside."

The scholarship shown in the book is massive and cosmopolitan; it reflects the assimilation in America of a great variety of European traditions. So with the vast resources of an American university, it promises to develop into a Sociology of Scientific Humanism. The book is rich with examples of the results of recent researches in Social Science. To give one example, the psychological analysis of the concept of democracy is fresh and valuable. Its essence is "shared power"; it is a "community of mutual deference", in which "mutual respect" is wide-spread. Practices that "interfere with the flow of mutual respect" arouses destructiveness. "It is impossible", says Professor Lasswell, "to exaggerate the loathing with which any friend of democracy looks upon many of the measures of totalitarian despotisms but it would be unwise to forget that the practical success achieved by these despotisms is that they have appealed to the craving for respect that is a powerful characteristic of human personality." Thus the phrase *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* implies that the power of government belongs to the masses who form the majority in all countries. As a matter of fact, this is only a slogan, the dictatorship of the proletariat is only a mask for the dictatorship of a well-organised party, which again is wholly dominated by a single man, who is the real dictator and the depositary of all power. In the Western demo-

cracies, as they are now, though there is no room for dictatorship, the power is not really "shared"; it remains entirely with the party which forms the government for the time being; only the people get a chance to choose which party should be in power. For a real sharing of power, and therefore for true democracy, we must turn to the ancient Indian system of polity. Indeed, the ancient Greeks coined the word democracy to signify the system of polity prevalent in India. In that system every village, town or city was like a republic governing itself and managing all its own affairs in its own right and not with a power delegated by the Government. The political power in the country was divided between these autonomous bodies and the central government whose chief business was to arrange for the defence of the country and the co-ordination of the activities of the numerous self-governing bodies in and through which the life and culture of the people developed intensely. It is democracy of this kind which can prevent the masses all over the world from following the false lights of Totalitarianism and Communism.

But though true democracy will create conditions favourable for progress, the complex problems of human life cannot be solved unless there is a change in human nature, and for this Professor Lasswell depends on the "science" of Psycho-analysis. He believes that given time, a "science of Democracy" can and will develop, integrating science, morals and politics. His book, a selection of sociological studies, has throughout one unifying theme: how to make democracy better by mobilising the whole field of modern sociological techniques which promise a new range of awareness and control. It is this claim of modern sociologists that has been very effectively challenged by Professor Sorokin, the Russian-born chairman of the department of sociology in Harvard University. He considers in detail the proposed political cures such as Democracy, The United Nations and World Government, Economic Cures and Plans such as Capitalism, Communism, Fascism, Scientific, Educational, Religious and other cures and Plans and comes to the conclusion that they are all quack cures for War and impotent Plans for Peace. Thus psycho-analysis on which Professor Lasswell depends gets special castigation in his hands. He says: "The theory and practice in question are scientifically fantastic, with the exception of the technique of revealing and releasing hidden associations and impulses, a technique derived from age-old religious and other practices. Morally they are degrading, socially they are highly disastrous. Therapeutically they sometimes achieve trifling successes (through a technique borrowed from ancient practices), but for the most part ineffective and frequently, in the hands of ignorant practitioners, decidedly harmful. Freudianism, indeed, is one of the most insidious products of our decadent sensate culture. A certain disillusioned

Freudian rightly declared that the Freudian theory is itself a disease. Its spread is a revealing symptom of the mental aberration of the society which it infects; in an insane asylum insane theories are bound to be more successful than sound ones. Is it any wonder, then, that in spite of the successful diffusion of such theories and techniques, in spite of the vast increase of psycho-analysis and of psychoanalytical institutions, research and literature, mental disorders have not abated and the bulk of patients have not experienced any notable recovery from their mental ailments?"

He has pointed out some serious shortcomings and difficulties in the plan for a world government on which most people are now pinning their faith for world peace. Its most fatal weakness, says Professor Sorokin, is the assumption that the cause of wars is the existence of a multitude of sovereign States and that as soon as these are abolished and one sovereign world government is established, lasting peace will come. This belief is very old and has been set forth many times. Recently, among its other promoters, E. Reves repeated it in his widely-read book, *The Anatomy of Peace*. We are told that "wars between groups of men forming social units always take place when these units—tribes, dynasties, churches, cities, nations —exercise unrestricted sovereign power. Wars between these social units cease, the moment the sovereign powers are transferred from them to a larger or higher unit." Commenting on this, Sorokin pertinently observes: "In spite of the clear enunciation of these 'laws' and of the host of authorities supporting them, the propositions in question are fallacious. From 500 B.C. up to 1925 A.D. in the history of Greece, Rome, and later European countries there were 967 international wars. Within the same period in the history of the same countries there were about 1623 civil wars, that is, wars occurring within the limits of a given sovereign State... *A purely external unification of all mankind under the sovereign rule of a world government would merely substitute civil wars for international wars, without decreasing their total number and frequency, their destructiveness, or their bloodiness and inhumanity.*" Sorokin arrives broadly at the conclusion that it is only by a change of human nature brought about by spiritual discipline that true peace and unity can be established, and for this discipline he turns to the Yogic methods of India. But as he has no Yogic discipline himself and deals with the subject more or less intellectually, his practical suggestions are not very helpful. Indeed, following the lead of Mahatma Gandhi, whom he takes as the greatest spiritual leader of the age, he has come back to the Sermon on the Mount and asks everybody to practise that individually as a means of the eventual salvation of the whole race. But has not this attempt been made since the time of Confucius and the great Buddha,

if not earlier? To whatever greatness that might have led individulas, humanity as a race has not been much uplifted morally or spiritually. What is now needed is not the practice of mental or moral rules, however noble—though this may serve as a preliminary discipline—but some method by which man can find the spirit or soul within and learn to live in that instead of living merely in the mind and life and body as most men do at present; and exactly this is the real object of all genuine Yogic practice.

Pointing to the true ultimate solution in the *Arya*, towards the end of the first World War, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future...A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one; that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, and that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation, but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be a discipline and a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies would be too large a subject to be entered upon here: it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road. No doubt, if this is only an idea like the rest, it will go the way of all ideas. But if it is at all a truth of our being, then it must be the truth to which all is moving and in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity, and compelling a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of humanity.

Could such a realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the

growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent,—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing,—the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection." (*The Ideal of Human Unity*).

A. B.

II

The World in Flames. *By K. K. Pradhan.* Distributors: Padma Publications Ltd., Lakshmi Bdg., Phirozeshah Mehta Road, Bombay I. Pp. 118+16, Price Rs. 5/-

It is symptomatic of the change in the time-temper that prophets of doom no longer hold the field as they once did. Spengler and Dean Inge are justly forgotten as bad dreams. Men are no more content to be told that they are afflicted with malaise and, what is worse, they are going to die of it. To diagnose the ills of society well enough might indicate a comparatively rich power of penetrative analysis. But to pronounce a verdict of inevitability of death sooner or later helps nobody. The human spirit refuses to be convinced that its age-long labour all along is destined to sink into an inglorious failure; it refuses to reconcile itself with fatalism. The world today knows very well that it is not in the pink of health. It is eagerly looking for an effective remedy which will set it on its feet again towards a happier future which human instinct somehow feels to be its own. And the various attempts which are at present being made to study the workings of human society and to plan and experiment with a view to its betterment, are to be welcomed as an earnest of active human faith in its high destiny.

The author of the present book is indeed, as its blurb describes, a lover of humanity. He feels intensely for the vast masses of people over the world who are condemned to a life of poverty and ignorance and presents a solution which he firmly believes will help build humanity into a faithful image of its Creator.

He makes a study of the beginnings and growth of human society from its primitive infancy, the barbaric age, and traces its development through the feudal and then the capitalistic era and analyses the causes of the present chaos and drift, physical and psychological. Concentration of wealth in the hands of a few is at the root of the topsyturvy economic condition of society. An ideal society in which all will be happy and free is one in which money is substituted by barter as means of exchange, property and classes

are abolished along with national frontiers and the field cleared for a free and spontaneous working in mutuality of the individual and the society. The change proposed is a very big one and the initiative has to come, in this as in all important movements, from the individual (p. xiv). The individual has first to put his own house in order. He has to build up a harmony among the workings of his 'action-side, feeling-side and intelligence-side', harmony which, when perfected, will give him a status into what the author calls 'Intuition': the poise of the Creator himself. The creative Godhead, he adds, is simply a harmonious poise of Sat-Chit-Ananda, the Original prototype of our Reason-Activity-Feeling; and the attainment of a corresponding poise first by individuals and then through their efforts, by a larger and larger section of mankind, would seem to be, according to the author, the one and ultimate solution for the myriad ills of human society.

We will not concern ourselves with the tenability or otherwise of this equation of the creative Godhead with the particular 'poise in Intuition' nor enter into a discussion of whether a balanced working of the physical, emotive and mental (intellectual) faculties of man constitutes an entry into the realm of Intuition. The question is whether such a balance or harmony—whatever its name and whatever its feasibility within the present formula—could provide the key to the eradication of man's imperfection of nature which really lies at the root of all his problems. Correction of the unbridled movements of the physical active being, promotion and development of the emotional side in the uplifting light of Reason with the ideal of a complete harmony among all the three faculties bring us, to what we would call in our parlance, the *sattwic* ideal of manhood. But is that enough? A nature such as man's which is embedded in its roots in layers of Ignorance and its diverse manifestations, which is subject to the operations of the lower *prakriti*, will still be *fundamentally* the same, however much you may control, regulate, modify and beautify its expressions. "The golden chain must be broken no less than the leaden fetters." (Sri Aurobindo). And for this purpose there must be effected a radical change in the normal consciousness of man. Unless there is change in the inner basis of action, his very *point d'appui*, all external permutations and combinations in the social set-up will not succeed in bringing lasting happiness to man.

As the author repeatedly observes, to understand the meaning and goal of creation one must listen to the Vedantic message of Sat-Chit-Ananda. But we could hardly accept his interpretation of the famous formula. Nor can we subscribe to his description of Intuition as the 'seat of pure feeling and sharpened wisdom' (p. 111). Intuition is something other and much more. It is a power of the Higher Consciousness. And even such a power cannot

by itself effect the crucial change in the nature of man. That can be done only by a spiritual discipline that can build an inner life in which man learns, by a progressive deepening and heightening of his consciousness, to effect a total change in the very texture of his being, a change which reflects itself in his Knowledge that is effective in action.

M. P.

III

South Indian Influences in The Far-East. *By K. A. Nilakantha Sastri.* Published by Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bombay. Price Rs. 4/8/-

The writer of this interesting little book has, in the past, established considerable reputation as a writer and teacher in Indian history. We would naturally expect a very high standard in the treatment of his chosen subject, viz. the part played by South India in the history and culture of the Far-Eastern island States.

But, before going into a consideration of the subject matter, let us congratulate the writer on the excellent get-up of the book. The printing is good, and a good deal of care has been taken in the spelling of Sanskrit and Pali words and names. We are unable, however, on account of ignorance, to say whether the same punctiliousness has been observed in the transcript of Chinese and Indonesian words. Probably, the matter is not of great importance except as an indication that where an oriental author has followed the European mis-spelling of Asiatic words and names, he has also been influenced by European opinion in more serious matters Asiatic. Anyhow, the map given at the end of the book is clearly printed and geographically correct, and we have found it very useful. Still, all things considered, the book is rather highly priced at Rs. 4/8/-.

The learned author is an acknowledged authority in Asiatic history. His facts are bound to be correct, and his inferences are entitled to the highest respect. Besides, his facts and opinions are largely supported by the writings of foreign specialists. But why write such a small book on a subject which is, in its implications, very wide indeed? For, what is really important is a true history of these States, comprehensive history, that would be of real human interest, that would give full value to the circumstances, inner and outer, which have affected the evolution of these peoples and their culture. A glance at the Table of Contents makes it clear that the present enquiry by Prof. Sastri covers an extensive area, including places that loom large in the eyes of the people of Asia today. It may tickle the vanity of the ordinary Indian to fancy that his ancestors civilised certain backward peoples, but

it is, surely, beneath the dignity of a savant to pander to that vanity. O course, in totalitarian States, we have, of late, seen instances where scienc has degraded itself by playing second fiddle to politics of a very narrow sort. Even before the rise of present-day dictatorships we have seer historians and economists boosting such slogans as 'the white man's burden' 'the divine right' of kings and Popes. But the day of slogans is fast disap pearing and it is rather late in the day to put forward new shibboleths The claim put forward on behalf of 'South India' must therefore be closel examined. To begin with, is there such a thing as South India, excep geographically? Ethnically, culturally, economically, Andhradesa is mor akin to its northern neighbour, Orissa, than its southern rival, Tamil Nad Whatever influence the latter wielded in the Far-East, was quite separat from the influence of Andhra.

The islands of the Far-East, not to speak of Burma, Siam and Indo China, had developed very early a culture of their own. The learned autho himself admits that certain progressive ideas undoubtedly came into Indi from the Far-East. Bronze kettle-drums and traction ploughs are cited a examples. But we need not attach very much importance to prehistori happenings, not even to late Neolithic. Even in the early Paleolithic perio there must have been considerable migrations. The race of the Javanes Pithecanthropos or the Chinese Sinanthropos must have travelled very far t arrive at the Pacific coastal region. Most probably there were land bridge all over; or, possibly, the present-day islands must have been parts of on large continent in those early ages. An Austral civilisation must hav developed in this region. It is impossible to fix any real prehistoric liabilitie on these Far-Eastern peoples. The geographical position of the islands i such that there must have been considerable mixture of blood in this popu lation and, as a result thereof, they must have had a very mixed cultura heritage. A great deal of their civilisation they are sure to have evolve themselves and a considerable part they have borrowed from others— notably from China and India—at a later period. But this borrowing an lending were not done in one or two or five centuries. It must have gon on for millenniums, in a continuous two-way stream. We are loth to la any emphasis on a race or culture exclusively Dravidian. But accordin to popularly conceived ideas, the pre-Vedic Dravidian was slowly and gra dually Aryanised. He could not have led out expeditions or missions t outside countries before he had gone through his own transformation When the great kingdoms—Chera, Chola and Pandya—were establishe in the South, they began looking about for outside contacts. It was bu natural that a large, powerful and opulent State like, say, the Chol

Mahamandal of Parantaka or, a few centuries later, the Vijayanagar empire of Krishnaraya should, under a political, commercial or even cultural urge, have exploited less fortunate lands. That there were Tamil Indian expeditions and conquests in the Far-Eastern islands does not admit of any doubt. But these were few in number. We have to have proofs that these big kingdoms of the extreme South had at their command a band of intrepid sea-rovers who would keep up constant contact with the archipelago. As far as Bengal and Andhradesa and the west coast were concerned, they were in a better position to maintain a close contact with outside countries as they always had at their service a good number of maritime adventurers who ran their ships regularly between their Indian ports on the one hand and China, Ceylon, Indonesia and the Persian Gulf on the other. That the people of Bengal had the reputation of being enterprising sailors would appear even from a passing reference in Kalidasa's great epic. Professors R. K. Mukherji and R.C.Mujumdar have by their research amply established that the sailors and colonisers of Bengal and Andhra and, even, of Western India played an important role in the Far-East. We are not interested in making out the superiority of any particular people in colonising or civilising the eastern islands. The Indonesians had a civilisation of their own before the Hindu arrived in their midst. Later on, the Chinese as well as the Indians reached the country and established their influence. Each nation had its own sphere; but there was a good deal of mix-up as well.

Between India and the Eastern lands, men and goods and ideas were constantly passing to and fro. At a certain period, preachers of Buddhism went out of India in all directions in obedience to the mandate of their great Founder. The Pala kings of Bengal took their share in this great work —an important share as far as the Far East was concerned. Likewise pilgrims and travellers flocked into India for centuries from countries far out, eastern as well as western. We are familiar with the names of the more prominent of these, but there must have been hundreds of them who belonged to humbler ranks. All these contributed to the free exchange of ideas as well as of merchandise. Indian modes of thought, Indian turns of speech, even Indian scripts found their way into the Eastern islands, and vice versa. There should be no occasion for making any invidious distinctions in these things. India has both given and taken freely in the sphere of knowledge, in the days of her glory. If she learnt certain things in astronomy from the West she embodied them in a special book—the Romaka Siddhanta. If she borrowed the drop curtain from the Greek theatre, she acknowledged the debt by calling it 'Yavanika'. When the Arab adopted the decimal system of notation from the Indian, he freely admitted it. The

animal stories of the Panchatantra, when they gained currency in Baghdad, were known as the 'Tales of Pilpai' after the name of the Brahmin Vidyapati who had carried them to that country. Several Sanskrit and Pali books, lost completely in India, were preserved in their Chinese translations in the Imperial Library of Pekin. There was never any question of the Chinese attempting to appropriate these as their own. The Arabs preserved the writings of Aristotle during the Dark Ages, when no one in Europe remembered them. But there was no question of their putting forward any preposterous claims. In the matter of culture, there is no shame in borrowing and adapting from others. Nor can the lender talk big about the loan advanced, without being guilty of gross indelicacy. Our author is too genuinely a savant to take pleasure in the fixing of liabilities on Indonesia in a spirit of narrowness. We give below two quotations from the book under review that give a fair indication of the mentality of the author.

'China and India were thus the two main sources from which higher cultural influences kept flowing into South-Eastern Asia.....the movements were by no means always only in one direction and Indonesian influences can be traced in some aspects of Indian life.'

'Our attention has been given mainly to the early cultural movements and the role of South India in their promotion. But this is only due to our initial intention to restrict the scope of our study.....Influences from other parts of India flowed into Java and other lands in the East, though as I understand the matter, they were, on the whole, weaker and less persistent than those from South India.'

This last thing is a matter of opinion. Professors Majumdar and Mukherji certainly do not decide in favour of South India. But why should we, after all, go into such details merely to pander to the vanity of Andhra or Bengal or Tamil Nad or Gujrat? India and China certainly played an important part in the development of the Far East. That is enough. We are not charging Prof. Sastri with any pettiness of outlook, but a book like the present one may lead smaller minds into a narrow rut of self-complacency. Just at the present moment it is incumbent on India to rise high above fetish, morasses of provincialism and sectarianism.

We have said nothing, so far, about the profound scholarship of Prof. Sastri or his power of presentation and elucidation. These are apparent in every chapter of this little book. What we have tried to emphasise is that a work of real erudition should bear no taint whatever of any petty group-egoism.

C. C. DUTT

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